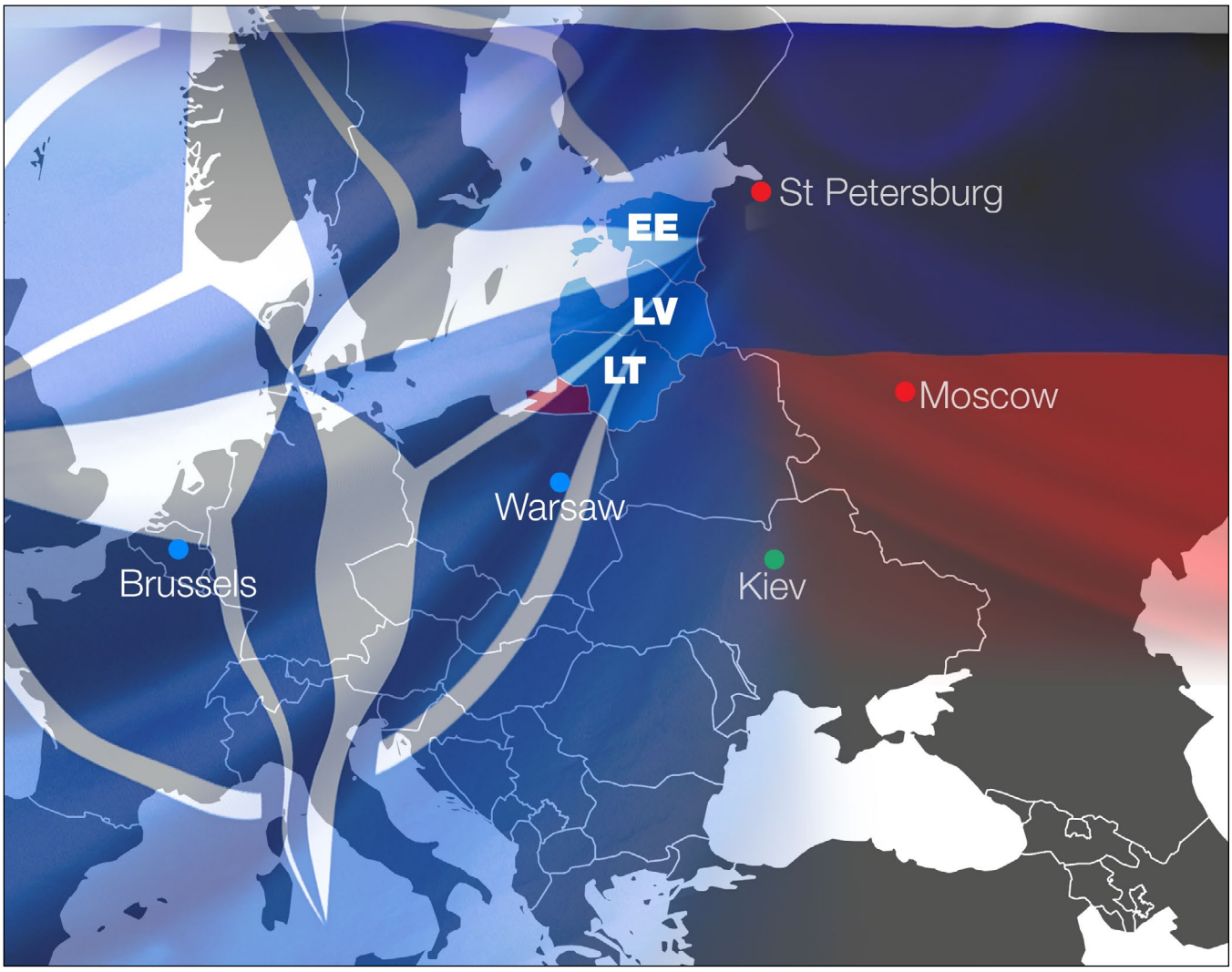
Asymmetric Operations Working Group

Ambiguous Threats and External Influences in the Baltic States

Phase 2: Assessing the Threat



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Executive Summary

- **Russia's strategic objectives in the Baltic region do not focus on the Baltic States as final targets, but on using the Batlic States to discredit and dismantle the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and undermining the European Union (EU) by using the Baltic States.** Experts in Russia and European security from the United States and the Baltic region agree that Russia could use the Baltic States toward this end by employing any one of a spectrum of actions, to include direct invasion with conventional forces, an incursion and occupation using irregular forces like the one witnessed in Crimea in 2014, or long-term fostering of social, political, and economic instability. Disagreement existed among experts as to which approach was more likely.

- **NATO's Article 5 commitment to collective defense in the case of an armed attack makes a direct invasion with conventional forces highly unlikely, though not without its proponents.** More likely, according to several experts, are long-term efforts to destabilize the Baltic States through social, economic, and political levers because the Kremlin does not wish to risk a conventional armed conflict with NATO.

- **Russia stands to gain little by taking Baltic territory, with the exception of a land corridor to Kaliningrad through Lithuania.** The prospect of a more unified and reinvigorated NATO in response to Russian annexation of Baltic territory deters Russian invasion and occupation.

- **Internal unrest aimed at changing the government in Moscow continues to be one of the Putin administration's chief concerns.** This and other domestic concerns can prompt and drive Russian foreign policy. For instance, taking bold actions in its near abroad is used to support arguments for preserving the current regime.

- **From an energy perspective, Lithuania stands in the most vulnerable position after losing its status as a net exporter of energy, but certain interdependencies between Russia and all three Baltic States decrease the potential efficacy of energy as a lever of influence.** Russia has demonstrated, however, that it is willing to suffer economic losses for political gain.

- **Regarding economic relations, Russia could leverage the actual economic marginalization of Russian compatriot populations, who earn less and have higher unemployment rates than ethnic Balts.** However, the Baltic investment and export/import environments are increasingly insulated from Russian interference by greater ties with the Nordic countries and the rest of the EU, as well as the ability to find and tap into alternative markets when Russia has imposed embargoes in recent months. The logistics and transit sectors remain vulnerable because of heavy Russian involvement and ownership.

- **Russian media dominate the information space with programming superior in quality, variety, and quantity in part because it receives extensive funding and support from the Kremlin.** Russian compatriot populations typically choose to engage in this information space, and youth tend to eschew all TV and printed media in favor of Internet sources for news and entertainment. Russian media present a perspective that derides the Baltic States and its allies and exalts Russia and its predecessor, the Soviet Union. Laws and regulations have proven ineffective at tempering Russian messaging or holding Russian media companies accountable.

- **Moscow supports and organizes non-government organizations (NGOs) in each Baltic State that enforce Russia's compatriots policy, a program intended to foment social and political tension in countries where Russian compatriots reside by calling attention to alleged human rights violations and advocating interpretations of history that vilify that country and make the Soviet Union heroic.** A popular position among Russian compatriot groups in the Baltic States continues to be that those countries support the

rise of neo-fascism and neo-Nazism targeting Russian residents. Russian agents and provocateurs have attempted to organize protests and demonstrations against the Baltic governments but have been able to mobilize few people.

- **Citizenship and language reforms in Estonia and Latvia remain contentious issues, but the percentages of stateless persons continues to decrease, and youth whose first language is Russian increasingly acquire Estonian and Latvian as a second language to gain better education and employment prospects.**

- **The Russian compatriot populations in the Baltic States are diverse and complex and do not represent unified segments of those national populations. The Polish minority in Lithuania is more organized and united in its support of Russian policies and deserves greater attention than it currently receives.** Among the Russian compatriot populations, there appears to be a psychological crisis wherein many support Russia emotionally as their homeland, but struggle to rationally explain or reconcile Russia's actions in eastern Ukraine with their idea of a benevolent Russia. Many reported a Crimea-like scenario could not occur in the Baltic States. A large contributor to that perception is that the standard of living in the EU incentivizes Russian compatriots not to repatriate and not to desire Russian interference, though they may desire certain policy changes by the Baltic governments.

- **From a military perspective, the Baltic States depend on the NATO alliance to deter and, if necessary, answer military threats.** Individually, the Baltic militaries remain too small to defend themselves against a full-scale Russian invasion, but the relatively high levels of professionalism and capability of their border guards and law enforcement provide protection from border incursions and internal disturbances growing out of control. Recent legislation in Latvia and Lithuania, as well as 2007/2008 legislation in Estonia, clarifies the circumstances in which national militaries can be mobilized internally and how they are to support law enforcement bodies.

- **Overall, the Russian threat to the Baltic States resides much more in efforts to divide their societies than it does in efforts to annex their territory.** A conventional invasion by Russian armed forces risks a revitalized NATO newly unified against it without acquiring significant gain, while Russian-sponsored NGOs and political parties could potentially sow sufficient discord in each country as to make them liabilities for NATO and the EU without incurring an Article 5 response.

Introduction

In 2014, Russia occupied and annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine, employing a coordinated combination of military and non-military operations and tactics that has since become known as hybrid warfare.[1] In his now infamous 2013 article on the future of warfare,[2] the Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, describes the components and objectives of hybrid warfare well, and it appears that Russia has been refining this modern version of hybrid warfare since at least the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and likely since the Chechen Wars. Russia's latest campaign in Ukraine revived concerns among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military planners about the threat from the East to the alliance's northeastern member states: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Commentators have posited that the Baltic States could be the next target of Russian aggression in this hybrid form based on various similarities with Ukraine—the presence of Russian compatriot populations, their status as former Soviet socialist republics, shared borders with Russia, and associations with Western alliances that Russia views as hostile toward its interests. In the case of Ukraine, that association with Western alliances was only beginning to develop through formally seeking membership in the European Union (EU) by signing an association agreement. In the case of the Baltic States, that association has been formalized and militarized as members of the EU and NATO since 2004.

This report is the second of two under a project aimed at understanding the threat to the Baltic States posed by Russian hybrid warfare via understanding what occurred in Crimea. The first report focused on studying the operations in Crimea and provided some background to the Baltic States and NATO. One of the conclusions in that report is successful Russian hybrid warfare operations depend on shaping the environment, leading this project to inquire whether Russia currently attempts to shape the environment in the Baltic States. General Gerasimov and history also make clear that shaping the environment of a target serves an integral role in hybrid warfare. In the diagram adapted from General Gerasimov's article, shaping takes place in the "covert origins" phase and includes activities like forming political opposition parties, developing coalitions and unions, and conducting information warfare. All of these activities have been witnessed in each Baltic State for several years. Accordingly, it is fair to say Russia currently attempts to shape the environment in the Baltic States. This report therefore focuses on how Russia exercises influence in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the energy, economic, information, social, political, and military environments in the region in a way that could contribute to a hybrid warfare operation. It remains prognostication, however, whether Russia exerts influence in the region to lay the groundwork for invading and occupying the Baltic States with conventional regular troops, whether shaping actions portend a full hybrid operation that could result in annexing territory, or whether such influence efforts serve a less drastic end goal that does not require employing the entire continuum of hybrid warfare. Accordingly, following this introduction, this paper undertakes an inquiry into Russia's strategic posture and objectives. Subsequent sections delve into the actors involved and methods used to exert influence in the energy, economic, information, social, political, and military domains. This paper concludes with a brief assessment of possible Russian hybrid warfare scenarios in the Baltic States.

Methodology

This report employed three methodologies. First, researchers conducted a standard literature review on each subject using primary and secondary source materials. Second, over March 23–24, 2015, the team held a collaborative analysis event (CAE) entitled "Assessing Russian Influence in the Baltic States," with participation by subject matter experts (SMEs) from the national capital region on Russia, the Baltic States, and European security, as well as a visiting scholar from the Latvian National Defense Academy. The event also had the distinction of hosting diplomatic officers from each of the Baltic embassies, including a Defense Counsel and two Deputy Defense Attachés. The CAE presented "hypotheses" for each domain to initiate and drive discussion on points of debate within the extant literature on each domain. Discussion among the participants affirmed or challenged results from the literature review and identified information gaps.

Finally, from April 13 to 30, a two-person team conducted field research in each of the Baltic States to gain greater insight and first-hand knowledge on these issues. The team conducted formal and informal interviews. The formal interview sample comprised government officials and academics with expertise in international relations, Baltic national security, Baltic politics, cyber security, energy security, Baltic society, and the Baltic and Russian information domains. The purpose of interviewing these SMEs in the Baltic States was to gain the perspective and insights of those who engage with these subjects from within, as opposed to outside, Baltic government and society as providing a unique perspective with greater fidelity to the ground truth. Each formal interview was scheduled for sixty minutes and conducted by both team members, except where the team separated to accomodate unscheduled formal interview opportunities. The informal interviews comprised convenience samples from cities the team visited. The team purposefully visited cities known to have high percentages of Russian compatriot populations. All formal interviews and some informal interviews were conducted in English, but a translator was acquired to conduct informal interviews with residents of Rezekne and Daugavpils, Latvia. Those informal interviews were initiated in Latvian and conducted in the language preferred by the interviewee. The majority of informal interviewees continued the interview in Latvian, and a minority switched to Russian. Informal interviewees focused on a respondent's cultrual identity and his or her opinions on living in eastern Latvia and relations with

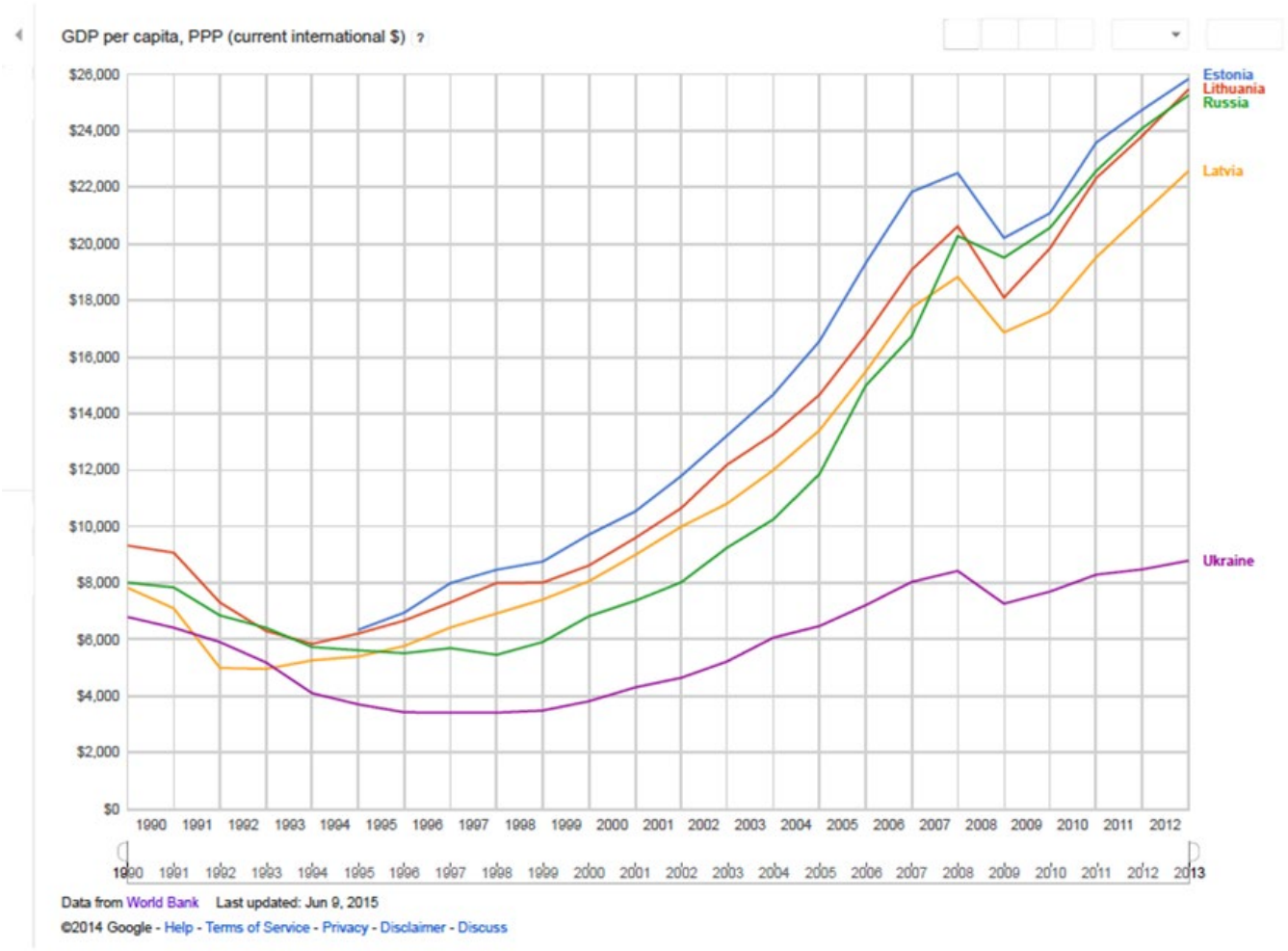

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Figure 1. Comparison of GDP Per Capita PPP of the Baltic States, Russia, and Ukraine

Russia. Observations from the field research appear at the end of each section.

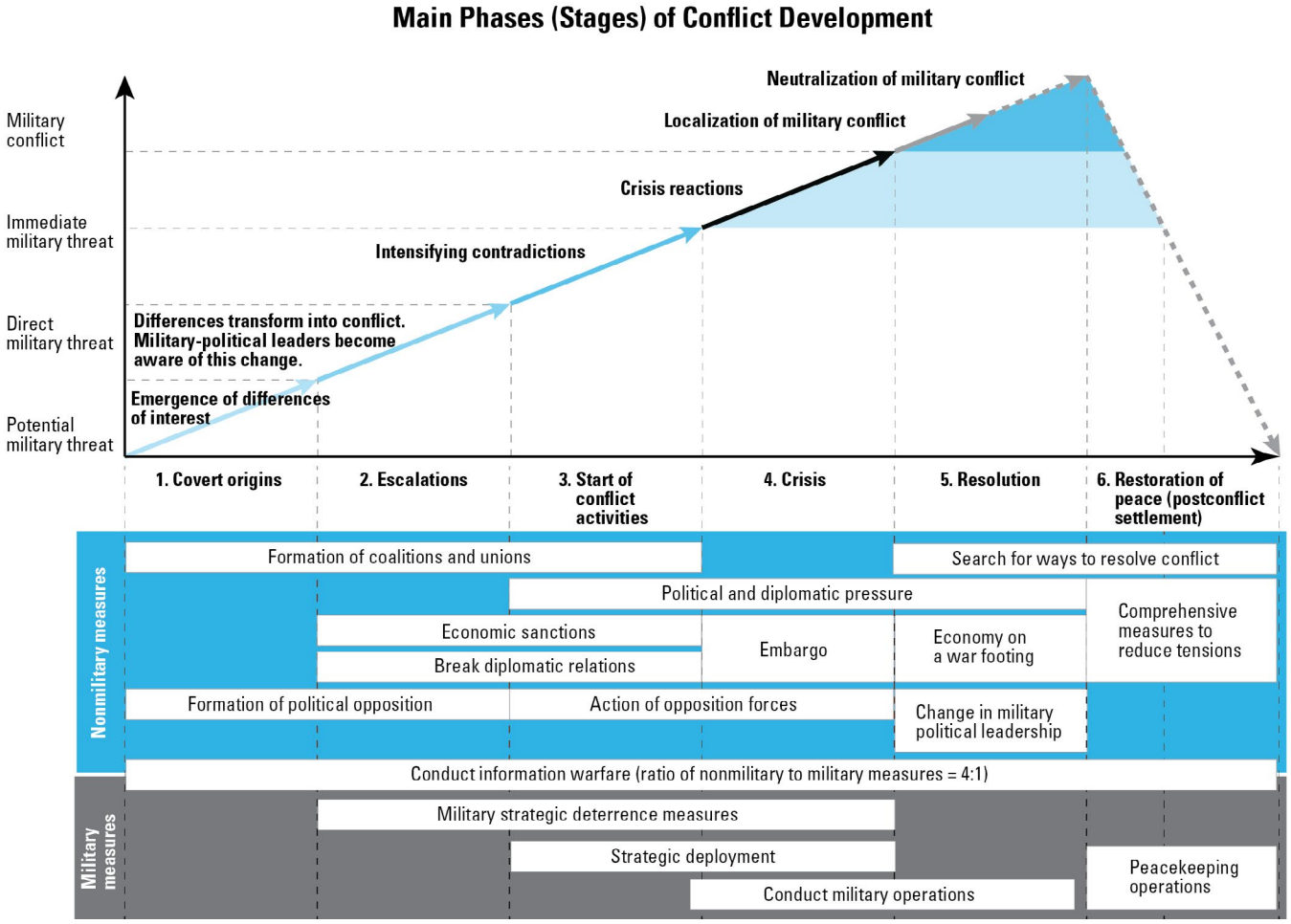
The Baltic States are not Northeast European Versions of Crimea

Before proceeding to examining Russia's strategic objectives in the region, it must be recognized from the outset that each of the Baltic States stands in a different position than Crimea prior to its annexation. For instance, there are no Russian military installations inside any of the Baltic States, whereas Sevastopol in Crimea provided ingress for Russian military and intelligence. Additionally, Baltic territory does not hold similar historical, cultural, or spiritual importance as Crimea specifically, or Ukraine generally. Those interviewed in the Baltic States emphasized that Russians have always viewed Crimea as part of Russia, but they have not viewed the Baltic States in the same way. Additionally, as Figure 1[4] illustrates, residents of Ukraine increased their standard of living by joining Russia, whereas residents of the Baltic States do not stand to gain in living standard or services by becoming part of Russia. As a number of formal and informal interviewees communicated, unlike in Crimea, Russians living in the Baltic States enjoy the best of both worlds: they can embrace their Russian culture and enjoy the government services of an EU member country. From an infrastructure and state capacity perspective, many interviewees also reiterated that in contrast to reports of incapable, ill-equipped, or corrupt Ukrainian border security, police, and military, Baltic security components have been training and serv-

ing alongside NATO and EU allies and partners, and they are, according to respondents, more professional and reliable than their Ukrainian counterparts.

Membership in NATO and the EU arguably presents the most meaningful difference in security posture between the Baltic States and Ukraine. If the diagram proposed in General Gerasimov's article (adapted in Figure 2) is to be the guide, then Russia is already in step two, Escalations, according to the types of measures identified in the bottom half of the diagram.

Consider the first of the six stages, Covert Origins. It correlates on the y-axis with potential military threat, characterized as the emergence of differences of interest. The independence and growth of each Baltic country during the 1990s and their joining NATO and the EU in the early 2000s clearly represent differences in interests; former components of the Soviet Union broke away, charted their own successful paths while the successor state Russia languished, joined the military alliance whose purpose is to counter and cabin Russia's predecessor, and joined an economic union that directly competes with Russia's long-struggling economy. In the boxes under covert origins reside examples of measures to address that difference of interests: formation of coalitions and unions, formation of political opposition, and information warfare. The Kremlin has been forming coalitions and unions inside each Baltic State for many years, most prominently through compatriot organizations and other non-government organizations (NGOs). Its support for opposition political parties has featured in Baltic politics for over a decade. Also, many in the Baltic States assert that Russia laid the groundwork for



See Note 5.

Figure 2. Gerasimov's Proposed Diagram of Hybrid Warfare

and has been engaging in information warfare since the 1990s.

More recent actions by Russia indicate that it has moved into the Escalations phase, characterized in the diagram as "differences transform into conflict." The measures identified in the diagram as accompanying this stage include economic sanctions, breaking diplomatic relations, the continuation of information warfare, and military strategic deterrence measures. Moscow imposed a number of embargoes on goods from the Baltic States in response to sanctions levied by the EU as part of its answer to Russia's annexation of Crimea. Fortunately, Baltic businesses have experienced some success in finding alternative markets for those embargoed goods. Diplomatic relations between Russia and the Baltic States persist, but actions such as the Russian prosecutor general reviewing the legality of the independence of all three Baltic States increases tension and potentially portends a complete break of diplomatic relations.[6] Information operations have only increased in the region, both in volume and severity of message. While the diagram does not define what constitutes military strategic deterrence measures, several recent practices would seem to qualify, including the Russian military craft incursions into Baltic, Nordic, and American air and maritime space, kidnapping an Estonian counterintelligence agent on the border, and engaging in a higher frequency of large-scale military exercises on the borders with these States. It may be debated what precisely the Russian leadership views as transforming a difference of interest into conflict so as to pose a direct military threat, but if considered from the measures listed along the x-axis, doubtless the Baltic States currently reside in the Escalations stage in the diagram proposed as depicting Russian hybrid warfare.

The Baltic States have not yet experienced all the measures listed under stage three, start of conflict activities, such as action by opposition forces and strategic military deployment. This diagram proved a viable construct for the operations in Crimea in the Phase 1 report of this project, in part because stage three did not elicit a response from an alliance like NATO and also in part because Ukraine did not present as stalwart or professional of an opponent as the Baltic States. Three unknowns stall the Baltic situation at the Escalations stage: each Baltic State's ability to handle internal unrest sponsored and supported by a neighbor nation, how NATO would respond to actions by opposition forces within the Baltic States and Russian strategic deployment, and what kinds of events in the region or inside Russia would prompt Moscow to view the Baltic States as direct, immediate military threats requiring the start of conflict activities.

The Baltic States stand in good position to handle internal unrest like that witnessed in Crimea. All three have modified their laws to permit their national militaries to act inside those states during peacetime and to delineate how military will cooperate with law enforcement in those situations, and Lithuania has carried out exercises specifically designed around the 2014 annexation of Crimea. However, while these amendments and exercises better secure and prepare the Baltic States, they are based on the last instance of Russian aggression. The Baltics would be better served by thought, preparation, and exercises focused on potential future Russian aggression. NATO leaders have made assurances that the Washington Treaty's Article 5 remains strong and there can be no doubt NATO will defend the Baltic States. However, Article 5 requires a unanimous vote by twenty-eight members, all of which face their own domestic political circumstances and their own troubling threats. This calls into question the possibility of unanimity in recognizing one of those threats as requiring a collective response. Additionally, the alliance would have to reach that unanimity quickly enough to enable an effective response. The decision to invoke Article 5 after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States could provide a valuable case study. Finally, the prospect of losing Ukraine to the EU unquestionably posed an immediate threat to Russia, but the Baltic States are already EU members.

Discussions with experts revealed two potential scenarios that could constitute immediate threats to Russia. First, Russia could view the permanent stationing of NATO troops in the Baltic States as a violation of the 1997 Founding Act. However, a Russian military response to this would be counterintuitive and counterproductive because it remains outmatched by NATO's conventional military capacity. Second, Russia would be threatened by the endangerment or desecration of

a sacred Russian artifact or symbol. The potential loss of Ukraine and its Crimean penninula was viewed in these terms because Orthodoxy came to Russia through Crimea, and Ukraine was home to the Kievan Rus and the birthplace of the Russian nation. The 2007 Estonian removal of the Bronze Soldier statue commemorating Soviet soldiers who served in World War II was an important symbolic loss to Russia, but Russia likely sees a more compelling and/or convenient threat in the endangerment of the Russian-compatriot populations in the Baltic States. Russian sponsored NGOs have alleged a re-birth of fascist governments aimed at the destruction, even genocide of those population. The NGOs and Russian officials have argued a responsibility to protect ethnic Russians and make mention of historical precedents of NATO humanitarian intervention. Ultimately, although differences in internal security capacity, existing military and economic alliances, and their cultural, spiritual, historical importance to Russians make the Baltic States a different case than Ukraine, the presence of Russian compatriot populations make them the target of influence under Russian policy.

Notes

1. This report does not address the definition of hybrid warfare or its origin. It takes the view that what the West has been referring to as hybrid warfare represents the modern instantiation of old Russian and Soviet practices. This modern version finds its most widely-cited representation in General Valery Gerasimov's 2013 article and the diagram found therein.
2. Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science in Anticipation [in Russian],"*Military-Industrial Courier*, February 27, 2013, (translated by U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group), http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632.
3. "GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international $)," Screenshot from Google Public Data, https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=ny_gdp_pcap_cd&idim=country:RUS:CHN&hl=en&dl=en#!ctype=l&strail=-false&bcs=d&nselm=h&met_y=ny_gdp_pcap_pp_kd&scale_y=lin&ind_y=false&rdim=region&idim=country:RUS:EST:LVA:LTU&ifdim=region&hl=en_US&dl=en&ind=false.
4. Data from the World Bank graphed by Google, Inc., available at: https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=ny_gdp_pcap_cd&idim=country:RUS:CHN&hl=en&dl=en#!ctype=l&strail=-false&bcs=d&nselm=h&met_y=ny_gdp_pcap_cd&scale_y=lin&ind_y=false&rdim=region&idim=country:RUS:EST:LTU:LVA:UKR&ifdim=region&hl=en_US&dl=en&ind=false.
5. Modified from http://vpk-news.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/VPK_08_476.pdf, derived from Gerasimov, "The Value of Science in Prediction."
6. "Russia's Prosecutor General to Review Legality of Baltics Independence," *Voice of America*, July 1, 2015, http://www.voanews.com/content/russia-prosecutor-general-to-review-legality-of-baltics-independence/2844416.html.

Strategic Posture

Russia's Operative Assumptions about the World and its Role

The Kremlin views the world through the lens of Realpolitik, wherein it aspires for Russia to sit at the table of global governance as a great power. The Putin regime believes Russia can only achieve such stature by maintaining primacy in its own neighborhood against the machinations of opponents who seek to erode the motherland's former sphere of imperial influence as the spoils of the Cold War.[1] Within this context, shrewd geopolitics "was elevated to supreme statecraft"[2] in the quest to shape a new world order that simultaneously expands the reach of the Kremlin and keeps the West at bay.

Russia's View of Itself

A common cultural narrative exists today in Russia depicting the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a peaceful achievement of the Russian people and elites, resulting from their willingness to end communism and embrace democracy. This narrative inspired policies that sought to preserve Russia's status as a world leader alongside the United States and Europe. In fact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was made possible only by the readiness of Russia to restore sovereignty to Soviet socialist republics, in return for which Russia expected inclusion in global governance.[3] However, several cycles of attempted integration with the West were sidelined by international controversies, such as the 1999 bombings in Belgrade under Yeltsin, the 2005 Orange Revolution, and the Georgian War in 2008.[4] Jaded by perceptions that Russia was exploited through the 1990s, Vladimir Putin rose to power and inaugurated a new era. Russia would now set a price for cooperation with the West, such as conditional commitments by the United States not to undercut Russian interests and policies in Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and the rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[5]

Despite Russia's improved financial situation and domestic consolidation of power,[6] Moscow views itself as under constant siege,[7] threatened by instability and

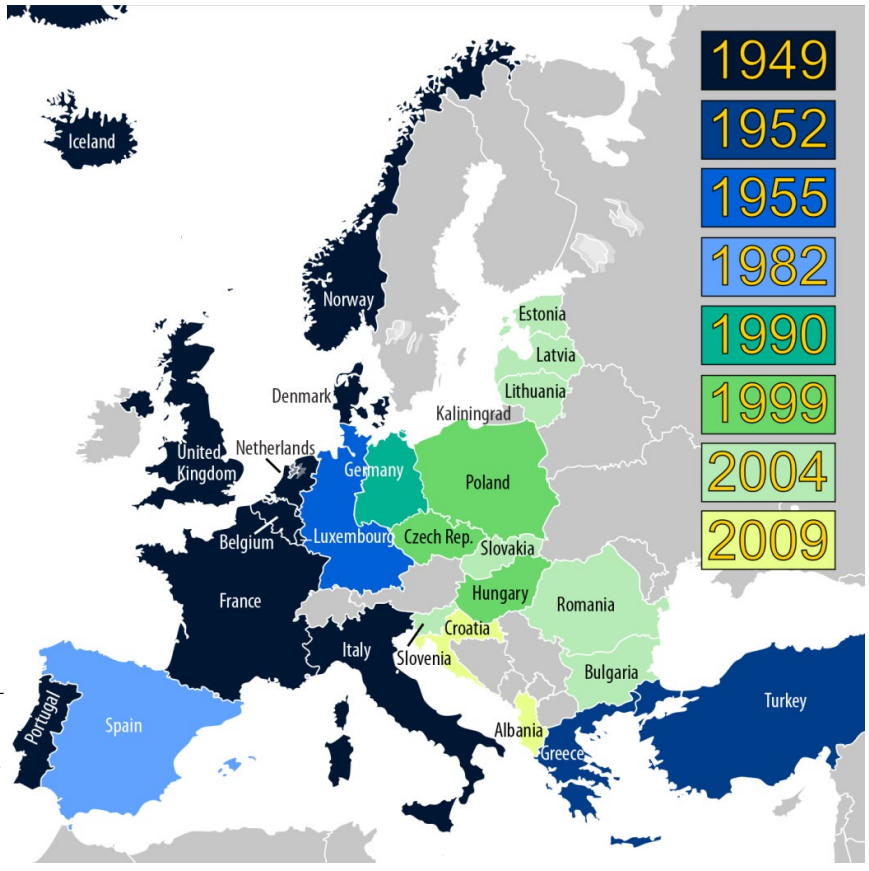
foreign interests encroaching on its borders.[8] The Putin regime believes it must contend with an internal threat: "Western agents and traitors who are preparing diversions and regime change from within" in an ongoing conflict by proxy,[9] where the next color revolution[10] may take aim at Putin's regime.[11] According to Alexei Arbatov, former Duma Deputy and Chief of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences, "Russia is surrounded by enemies led by the U.S., the U.S. is using the pro-democracy opposition inside Russia to subvert the regime, the U.S. with its allies may invade Russia anytime, [and] the West plans to use military power to seize Russia's natural riches."[12] Due to such paranoid perceptions of the West, as well as the perception of being spurned by the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia made it not only a foreign policy priority but also a national security priority to assert itself as an international and regional power by creating its own orbit of influence in the former Soviet republics.[13]

Russia's View of the World and the United States

Russia's view of the world is rooted in a defensive posture, always positioned to maintain or increase its power, autonomy, and international presence, and with a high level of suspicion of NATO and the United States. Russia's geographic immensity has historically posed a security challenge, which it solved by maintaining friendly peripheral states. However, according to Thomas Graham, "[t]he challenge to Russia today is of a different order than previous ones. Although the geography is similar, the geopolitical and global economic setting is radically different…Russia is now totally surrounded (beyond the former Soviet space) by countries and regions that are more dynamic – politically, economically or demographically – than it is."[14]

This is a dramatic reversal of historical trends, and Russia has so far only been able to slow, not reverse, the disintegration of its influence over the former Soviet space. Moscow chose not to passively accept its degradation to a second-tier power and instead has sought to reassert itself as a great power alongside the United States and China.[15] Toward this end, Russia has adopted a revisionist foreign policy that seeks to undermine the world order imposed on it by the West in the 1990s and replace it with a new international power structure.[16]

Russia views NATO expansion into former Soviet republics as its primary national security risk,[17] and Russia protects its interests in those areas zealously. Formal actions taken by those former Soviet republic nations toward association with Western infrastructures "are seen in the Kremlin as profoundly hostile moves that must be resisted at all costs."[18] As central Europe was steadily "being taken over by the victorious West as both war booty and a possible bulwark against a future resurgent Russia"[19] during the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia became convinced that it "was not to be integrated into



See Note 20.

Figure 3. NATO Expansion

the West, but managed by it,"[21] isolated and viewed with suspicion.[22] According to Ivan Krastev, "[w]hat Moscow learned in its 'decade of humiliation' is that the West respects strength, not shared values."[23] Russian democrats saw the West's moves to exclude and manage Russia as a vote of no confidence in its ability to sow a successful democracy.[24]

According to Dmitri Trenin, "many Russians [view NATO as] a code word for America in Europe, or more precisely the U.S.-led system of alliances and power infrastructure."[25] Russian perceptions of NATO worsened dramatically during the bombing of Yugoslavia. A defensive alliance was now offensive, and NATO summarily ignored Moscow's admonitions against the war.[26] Despite a brief warming period in Russo-NATO relations, NATO nonetheless continued dramatic expansion into the former Soviet sphere. This demonstrated to Russia that positive relations would not help preserve its interests.[27] Concomitantly, the EU expanded, which seemed to encourage regime change along Russia's border, evidenced by so-called color revolutions. These developments made the former Soviet republics a foreign policy priority.[28] President Putin expressed his belief the Western policy of "deterring Russia" persists. Other Russian officials have characterized the 2013–2014 crises in Ukraine as EU and NATO attempts "to tear away Ukraine from Russia" and "destroy a Slavic Union," prompting massive shows of military force in exercises to mark "the beginning of a new epoch of military-political confrontation between Russia and the West."[29]

Russia views the United States as a threat independent of NATO and other international bodies, specifically regarding democratic ideals. Russia is less fearful of the spread of democracy per se than of U.S. policies promoting it. Russia suspects U.S. policies foster Western influence eastward and apply domestic pressure on the Russian regime.[30] Scholar Andrei P. Tsygankov attributes this fear of domestic destabilization and reactive assertiveness to "Washington's regime-change policy" that failed to recognize the interactive nature of Western-Russian relations.[31] Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Valery Zhorkin, wrote in 2012 that "[t]he West went after Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi. They are all dead. The West will dispatch al-Assad, they will come for us….The West is promoting a malicious pro-democracy mass movement in Russia to have a pretext to intervene and destroy our nation."[32]

These perceptions drove Russian policy that ejected the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) from the country in 2012. USAID disbursed funding to the election monitoring group Golos, whose work helped expose vote rigging by Russian authorities during the 2011 parliamentary elections. Its ejection triggered massive anti-Putin and pro-democracy protests in Moscow. Russia's Foreign Ministry accused USAID of "attempting to influence the outcome of elections by distributing aid grants," viewed in the Kremlin as a cog in a larger U.S. State Department plot to establish an internal threat to the regime in Russia.[33]

This fear of U.S.-sponsored domestic turmoil is informed by the Kremlin's reading of the color revolutions as U.S.-conceived and -led plots to reduce Russia's influence in the region.[34] "At worst," writes Trenin, "they constituted a dress rehearsal for exporting a revolution into Russia itself, culminating in installing a pro-U.S. liberal puppet regime in the Kremlin."[35] Putin's statement that the West "organized and provoked" the Euromaidan political crisis to "reinvigorate NATO"[36] illustrates Moscow's view that the United States and NATO threaten Russia and interfere in its sphere of influence.

The Primary Strategic Objectives and Means of Russian Foreign Policy

The overarching goal of Russia's foreign policy is to reclaim its status as a great power in the twenty-first century. Two simultaneous and complementary agendas support this imperative: the promotion of a multipolar global order and establishing a new power structure at the expense of a Western-centric international regime. Establishing a new power structure would entail Russia becoming the security and economic hub of Eastern Europe and Eurasia by successfully insulating and strengthening an exclusive sphere of influence over the former Soviet region. The protection of this regional sphere of interest is closely tied to quelling domestic threats to the regime and ensuring its political stability. Foreign policy objectives concerning Russian compatriots, language, and culture feature strongly among

the means of projecting and asserting influence in its regional sphere of interest.

Reestablish Russia as a Great Power

According to Ruslan Pukhov, the director of the Centre for Analysis and Technologies (a Moscow-based think-tank with deep ties to the defense ministry), there exists a common sentiment among establishment and opposition interests alike that "Russia must restore itself as an economic, military and political superpower," which includes "rebuilding its military, industrial and technological base."[37] This strategic focus is reflected in the first two priorities named in the Foreign Policy Concept published in 2013. The focus is not only among the elite. Polling data of the Russian population in 2007 showed that a majority of Russians saw "their country as strong, but not a superpower," lacking the economic prowess and high standards of living characteristic of world powers. Of note, those polled expected Russia would ascend to superpower status in fifteen to twenty years. In the same poll, one-third of Russians considered the revival of superpower status for Russia an important goal, with the economy as a primary obstacle.[38]

Restoring the greatness of the Russian state as a self-standing and full-fledged great power among equals, with global reach in the twenty-first century international order has been and remains a goal of the Putin regime.[39] Alexander Nikitin, President of the Russian Political Science Association, characterized this ambition as the twenty-first century priority to overcome "the syndrome of post-Soviet weakness" and to emerge as "the first among [the] BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) who made it up to the top of 'second generation global power.'"[40] The creation of "favorable external conditions" for Russian economic growth, as characterized in the Foreign Policy Concept, is an imperative component to this broader goal.

Moscow views the United States and allied Western nations as its chief enemy, according to Pukhov, because they actively oppose Russian efforts to create favorable external conditions for Russian growth. Actions taken by Western nations in the former Soviet sphere are perceived as acts to reestablish dominance in the Russian "neighborhood." This anti-U.S. outlook subsided during efforts to engage in a foreign policy reset, based on Russia's need for Western capital and technology for further economic development.[41] However, anti-U.S. sentiment reemerged in the aftermath of the crises in Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea. In comments on military modernization efforts, General-Colonel Valery Gerasimov, First Deputy Defense Minister and Chief of General Staff, stated that "Russia is effectively rearming to repel the threat of foreign invasion."[42] Likewise, much of the ruling class and Russia's general population seem now to reject integration with the West and its basic principles by "welcoming international pariah status" if it is necessary for restoring Russia as a great power.[43]

An integral policy priority to accomplish this goal has been to reverse Russia's internal decline by preserving political unity and reviving the economy.[44] The close relationship between this policy priority and the goal of reestablishing great power status contributes to a confluence of foreign and domestic political thinking in Russia. As a result, Moscow views foreign developments as domestic threats to the regime and domestic political pressures as external intimidation. The spread of Western liberal-democratic values and policies in the former Soviet republics ignites the fear of insurrection in Russia, and domestic reform movements are characterized as being incited by foreign governments. The regime uses this perspective to raise the specter of intervention by the West as a pretext to justify a unitary, autocratic state and neo-imperialist policies as a necessity for national security.[45]

Promote a Multipolar Global Order

Following his election to the presidency in 2000, Vladimir Putin approved a new foreign policy concept that declared, "Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modern world with its great variety of interests."[46] Documents such as the Official Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation in 2008 and 2013 shifted the language from the "formation of a just and democratic world order, based on collectiveness in finding solutions to international problems,"[47] to "set up a fair and democratic system of IR," respectively. However, Russia believes its idea of multipolarity[48] is incompatible with Western understandings of multilateralism

and international cooperation. In his 2007 speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, Putin derided Western agendas on multilateralism as a "unipolar world…in which there is one master, one sovereign" who can take "unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions."[49] In Russian political thinking, the current order and institutions for multilateralism are not multilateral at all, but "collective unilateralism" and "collective unipolarity" where the Western "poles" govern and dictate to the rest of the world by "delegating [their] functions to [the] EU, NATO, and other international organizations."[50]

Russian foreign policy understands of the concept of a multipolar world order through the lens of two models: the great power management model and the balance of power model. Great power management "functions as a mechanism for coordinating [the] policy strategies of key powerholders [sic] that prioritizes order over justice."[51] This model can be seen in the pragmatic negotiation of international issues by the centers of gravity that represent regionally integrated "powerful poles" [e.g., the Eurasian Union, EU, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN)]. Putin writes that he is "convinced that the establishment of the Eurasian Union and efficient integration are approaches that will enable members to take a prominent place in our complicated, 21st century world." Combined with a balance of power approach (often viewed in Russia as the only model for a multipolar world), the "development of international institutions in the CIS space" becomes a clearer component of a global as well as regional strategy, namely the "strategic use of Russia's influence as the former imperial center with a view toward creating a counterbalance to the West."[52]

The aim of Russia's multilateral world order, according to Dmitri Trenin, "is to bring about a less U.S./Western-centric system,"[53] a system that Putin blames for global instability and chaos.[54] This is integral to Russia's grand strategy that other analysts predicted "Moscow [would] push hard [to achieve by reshaping] the current post-Cold War security order,"[55] and that "Moscow is willing to apply limited military force to achieve."[56] For instance, Putin's early 2013 demands for "swift and decisive" reintegration of the post-Soviet space in the Eurasian Union to uphold "multipolarity" in the world also included the necessity that "full-strength, permanent, battle-ready military groupings must be deployed on all strategic lines of advance" to deter the numerous threats surrounding Russia.[57]

In 2008, Nikitin, despite reiterating the "old goal" for Russia to be "fully adopted into a 'Wider Europe,'" went on to outline two new goals. The first goal was to "negotiate a share of functions and responsibilities with NATO and the EU" in the post-Soviet space, and the second was to moderately "fence" Russia off from the "negative aspects of globalization."[58] Just as the Moscow-promoted "multi-polar world is a direct and unequivocal alternative to globalization,"[59] the sought-after negotiation of shared "functions and responsibilities" is reflected in the great-power management model. After its 2008 victory in Georgia, Russia not only demonstrated willingness to utilize military force in its "near abroad," but also openly announced its zones of "special interest,"[60] including the Baltic States. Ruslan Pukhov declared Russia a "revisionist power" in 2012, opposed to the present world order and willing to undermine that order to achieve its ambitions.[61]

This great-power management model "denotes a pragmatically depoliticized type of bargaining between the world poles" centered on "a more business-as-usual type of bargaining with concessions from both sides."[62] In 2012, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul experienced Russia's vision for the pragmatic and "non-confrontational protection of national interests."[63] At the time, Russian authorities attempted to "link" their cooperation on sensitive international issues, such as Iran nuclear non-proliferation, containment of North Korean ballistic missile and nuclear ambitions, to U.S. recognition of Moscow's "privileged spheres of influence" in the former Soviet republics.[64] Likewise, Moscow-based Western diplomats revealed that amidst the conflict in eastern Ukraine "Russian officials [were] constantly trying to place a map on the negotiation table to carve up Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe into spheres of interests."[65] While the Baltic States and Ukraine share the feature of being within Russia's perceived privileged spheres of influence, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, unlike Ukraine,

are all members of NATO and the EU. The annexation of Crimea and the hostilities in eastern Ukraine are, in part, Russian responses to Ukraine's decision to seek EU membership and sign an association agreement, and it has not stopped Ukraine from integrating with the EU. Both Russia's goal and methods in the Baltic States will be different from those in Ukraine because they will represent a response to a different scenario. In the case of Crimea, Russia seized territory crucial to its historical, cultural, and spiritual legacy before it came under the control of the EU. In the case of the Baltic States, because they are already members, it is more likely that Russia will undertake actions to undermine the cohesion of the EU and NATO. However, seizing territory and similar actions would presumptively trigger NATO's promise of collective defense and unite that community, so it is more likely Moscow would seek an alternative approach to challenge EU and NATO solidity.

The 2008 invasion of Georgia was directly related to Georgia's NATO aspirations, as well as indirectly driven by Russian ire over Western support to Ukraine and Kosovo. The invasion was a means to demonstrate to the Central European and Central Asian states that they cannot depend on the United States or NATO to protect them, as well as to communicate to NATO that admitting former Soviet republics carried serious risks.[66]

The Russian-supported enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia now serve as an obstacle to Georgian NATO membership.[67] The goal of undermining regional confidence in alliances with Western powers and the means of creating breakoff regions as impediments to integration with Western institutions is reflected in recent Russian activities in eastern Ukraine. Those activities seek to "undermine U.S. influence and power worldwide" by striking "at the transatlantic link to undermine NATO."[68] Arguably, part of the value in Russia's lease with Ukraine for basing rights in Sevastopol was its role as "an obstacle to Ukraine's possible future intention to seek NATO membership."[69]

In alignment with Russia's hope to loosen the bonds within the Western "poles," the Kremlin began a concerted effort to deepen relationships with right-wing parties throughout western Europe, which are critical of the EU and the respective country's EU and NATO membership (known as euroskeptics). Some of these right-wing party leaders have emerged as allies of Vladimir Putin. For example, France's National Front received a "9 million euro loan from a Russian bank owned by a reputed Putin confidant," Austria's Freedom Party leaders have regularly visited Moscow (including an event hosted by Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeew), and various other representatives receive airtime on Russian media.[70] There are additional reports that Russia may be financing Jobbik in Hungary and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and that Russian oligarchs are purchasing European newspapers, all indicative of an "anti-European, divide-and-rule offensive."[71]

Insulate and Strengthen Russian Influence in the Eurasian Sphere

Longstanding goals imperative to the Russian foreign policy and national security strategies are to "create a belt of Good Neighborhood" around Russia and "remain allied with at least some [former Soviet republic] states."[72] Nikitin added to these objectives that Russia must "restore a collective security approach to the region" by forging alliances through the infrastructure of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).[73] Pukhov noted that within the "Moscow consensus" these objectives required Russia to demonstrate dominance in its "natural sphere of influence—the former Soviet republics" by dislodging Western influence in the region using soft power or direct military efforts against anti-Russian regimes. All neighbors are potential adversaries, "especially pro-Western, nationalistic anti-Russian entities, like Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states."[74] Imperial borderlands have historically been vital to Russia, both as elements of its power center and a geographical cushion to protect Russia from Western powers. This security tradition was inherited by the modern Russian state, a top military interest of which remains the prevention of current or former members of the CIS from joining NATO.[75]

This historical and geographic context is why some analysts characterize Moscow's goals as "limited and largely defensive"[76] and akin to a Russian incarnation of the Monroe Doctrine.[77] However, this "belt of Good Neighborhood" carries sinister undertones for the gov-

ernments of Western-oriented nations in Central and Eastern Europe. It denotes the neo-imperialism of the Putin regime's resolve to "advance Russian interests in each" of the former Soviet republics. In Putin's multipolar world, these recently independent states are "natural elements of [his] project" to build "a Russian power center." And, Ukraine was a necessary element above all else for its economic foundation.[78]

Putin vocally asserted Russia's right to "reintegrate the post-Soviet space" and rejected "foreign pressure to slow down the integration process."[79] Simultaneously with reintegration, Putin promoted better relations with Europe, "which is our natural partner."[80] In doing so, Putin implicitly offers the option of "Finlandization," allowing Russian influence in the region to go unchallenged and benefit economically from cordial trade for oil and gas or otherwise risking steadily escalating regional confrontation.[81]

Russia has employed two methods to achieve its goal of repelling Western influence in its sphere of interests. The military route has been previously discussed. The other route is soft power, exerted through "culture and education, science and technology, and the Russian Orthodox Church,"[82] according to the Russian International Affairs Council. This soft power route is a major component of maintaining Russia's status as the political and cultural center of gravity in the region. Putin defined soft power as instruments and methods to achieve foreign policy objectives without the use of weapons. Soft power is also demonstrated through "the strengthening of the Russian language, the active promotion of a positive image of Russia abroad, the ability to integrate into global information flows."[83] The regime's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church (which hoped to maintain its "canonical territory" intact, particularly in Ukraine)[84] has been used to legitimize Kremlin narratives concerning the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea.[85] Likewise, according to the Swedish Defense Research Agency and Baltic think tanks and intelligence agencies, Russia's Compatriots Policy serves as "a way of exerting soft power over [neighboring] countries [and] has raised concerns in the Baltic states for many years."[86]

Finally, regarding the "close connection between Putin's domestic and foreign policy," each aimed at restoring Russia's power abroad, both "required rebuilding the power of the Russian state at home."[87] This overlap resulted in the 2014 military doctrine that illustrates "links between domestic and foreign enemies."[88] The feared conspiracy between Western powers and domestic Russian dissenters has been painted across Moscow's military doctrine and strategy. The latter was exemplified in the Kavkaz-2012 war games (concealed from Western observers), at which Chief of General Staff, General

Collaborative Analysis Event Insight:

Some of the literature addressing this issue indicates a debate on whether Russia acts defensively or offensively. Discussion clarified that this is a false dichotomy mirror-imaged onto Russian strategic thinking. The group articulated that Russia views itself as a great power with a privileged zone of influence (the post-Soviet sphere), which Moscow sees as a fortress under siege by NATO and EU encroachment. From its perspective, Russia undertakes necessary actions in neighboring countries to serve geopolitical objectives, chief among which is answering Western encroachment, and from the West's perspective, those actions are offensive or imperialist. Additionally, the group made clear that Russia views this as a zero-sum game across the full spectrum of national power and that it is in persistent Phase Zero operations to shape the environment for the next confrontation. There was disagreement, however, on whether Russia's objective to receive respect as a great power serves the goal of preserving Putin's regime or vice versa.

of the Army, Nikolai Makarov stated that the games "involved the resolving of two distinct very important strategic tasks: to use troops to resolve an internal conflict, while at the same time repulse an external conflict" (capabilities in development since the 2008 invasion of Georgia).[89] Pukhov similarly implored that Russia should prepare to win low-intensity conflicts against separatists in Russia and adjacent states, while also requiring the capability to block "incursion of U.S. forces into the post-Soviet space" without the use of nuclear weapons (a desire expressed in the language of the new 2014 military doctrine of "non-nuclear deterrence").[90] In this way, the potential spread of pro-democracy movements in neighboring states and any domestic activities by human rights groups or diplomatic agents are closely scrutinized and at times restricted.[91] The role of oligarchs cannot be ignored as, in a time of crisis, imposed control over the powerful oligarchs is also imperative.[92]

Field Research Observations

When interviewed about Russia's strategic objectives, respondents emphasized that Western analysis of Russia's motives and actions often fails to sufficiently consider emotional and spiritual motivations. Current emotion in Russia includes the idea that Russia is under attack from the West and needs to reassert its greatness and its empire. A few respondents remarked that under the Russian perspective, if Russia is not an empire, then Russia is nothing. Several interviewees qualified this viewpoint by noting that Russia need not hold territory to satisfy this imperial ambition, but unencumbered influence could be sufficient.

When asked why Russia would be interested in conducting hybrid warfare in the Baltic States, the majority of formal interviewees responded that Russia was not interested in the Baltic States per se, but in disrupting, discrediting, and dismantling NATO. Respondents were careful to point out that while Russia wanted to undermine NATO, it did not want to precipitate a conflict under Article 5. When asked how Russia might accomplish that objective, respondents generally replied that it could try to initiate some manner of internal disturbance, from riots to an insurgency. However, a few respondents also highlighted the importance of conventional military operations as a destabilizing force, whether separate from or in conjunction with unconventional operations. One respondent emphasized that Russia would engage in what he termed "mischief" in the Baltic States to divide the EU and discredit the idea of Europe, and that while Russia had begun this approach already, there remained opportunity to intensify the mischief before reaching an Article 5 decision point.

Respondents also replied that Russian domestic conditions and politics can drive its foreign policy decisions. Regime preservation, according to many respondents, stands paramount among motivations for Russia's foreign policy actions, and the regime needs the West to continue to play the role of enemy. From a more pragmatic perspective, respondents identified Russia's struggling economy as a potential driver of aggression but noted that the costs of aggression abroad could further strain the Russian economy. However, they confirmed a finding from the literature that Russia is willing to suffer economic loss for geopolitical gains.

Respondents named a limited number of concrete gains Russia could obtain from hybrid warfare in the Baltic States, as opposed to ideological or political gains. Most notable among these was a land connection between Belarus and the exclave of Kaliningrad. Such a connection could remove dependence on Lithuanian transport and other Baltic logistics companies. More importantly, interviewees observed that such a connection would cut off the land connection between the Baltic States and the rest of NATO, as well as enhance Russia's military transport and access to the exclave.

Overwhelmingly, however, the SMEs interviewed in the region identified Russia's strategic objective to be undermining Western institutions, as well as Western concepts that threaten Russian ideals and culture, in which the Baltic States participate. These include NATO an the EU, as well as the concept of a united Europe and the West's interpretations of human rights.

Conclusion

This strategic motivational picture resembles Crimea in 2014 in a limited manner. For instance, the Baltic States do not match Russia's aim to maintain control over non-NATO and non-EU space in Eastern Europe, whereas Ukraine presented the archetypical case for

executing that goal. Instead, the Baltic States represent NATO allied space that would have to be won back if Russia wanted to assert complete control over that territory. However, while overt aggression in the Baltic States would strengthen NATO and counter Russia's interest in dividing and weakening NATO, stoking insecurity through low-level and small provocations provides a means of interference and disruption that does not as clearly risk a cohesive allied response. Indeed, experts during the CAE and respondents during field research noted that convincing other members of NATO to vote in favor of Article 5 during a Crimea-like scenario would be politically difficult; each NATO country faces its own domestic security dilemmas, and each would struggle to justify to their respective constituencies' expenses to protect three small states in northeast Europe. Crimea, as part of Ukraine, was moving toward union with Western alliances and, in that way, represented a territory to be reclaimed before permanently lost. In contrast, the Baltic States already allied themselves with NATO and the EU and, in that way, represent not territory to be retaken, especially under the Damocles sword of a full NATO response, but opportunities to interfere with and sow discord within those Western alliances.

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Energy Security

In the context of European integration, the Baltic States are sometimes referred to as "energy islands" due to their limited connectivity to the energy networks of other European nations. This is a legacy of the region's Soviet past when Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were part of the Soviet Union's vast system of integrated energy networks.[1] Although each of these countries has experienced many dramatic changes since gaining independence in the early 1990s, there have been comparatively few modifications to primary energy transmission infrastructure and virtually no change in upstream suppliers. Thus, these three states continue to receive natural gas via Russian pipelines and remain connected to the Moscow-controlled power grid that once serviced much of the Soviet Union and several Eastern Bloc nations.[2] Figure 4 captures these relationships, but also hints at Baltic and EU aspirations for a new status quo. Designs for energy independence (from Russia that is) are underway, as evidenced by the Estlink cables between Finland and Estonia (both are now operational) and several other planned cables, including Nordbalt (Sweden to Lithuania). Moreover, a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) storage and regasification unit in Klaipeda, Lithuania became operational in early 2015 (after the production of the map),[3] and Estonia and Latvia each have plans to construct similar facilities.[4]

Therefore, the region appears to be in the midst of transition. This raises the question, how secure is the energy supply in these three countries? The following analysis aims to address this matter in two parts. First, it utilizes economic indicators to produce energy profiles for each of these states. Such a quantitative approach is necessary to define the individual character of each energy economy, especially because the Baltic States are often addressed as a single entity. The second section assesses political dynamics. In the broadest terms, there exists a clash between the EU's hopes for a liberalized energy market and Russia's pursuit of continued, even expanded, leverage over energy exports. Within the EU, however, competing interests undermine aspirations for a more united front. Hence, this analysis concludes with an examination of the policies, strategies, and a few tactics of relevant stakeholders.

See Note 5.

Figure 4. Engergy and Gas Pipeline Infrastructure in the Baltic Region

Determining Energy Security

Energy security is a determination based on data from the following three categories: energy dependency, the diversification of import sources, and the composition of energy mix.[6] These three indicators are based on primary energy sources, meaning those that are in natural form and have not undergone manmade conversion processes. However, conversion to secondary energy must be considered as well. After all, if a country had sufficient primary sources but could not generate electricity, power would have to be imported. This reliance on imports would, in turn, degrade the country's overall energy security. Therefore, this section will also include a review of each country's electricity generation and usage.

Energy Dependency

Precise calculations are possible using "energy dependency," an indicator that "shows the extent to which an economy relies upon imports in order to meet its energy needs."[7] Table 1 features data on energy dependency rates for key resources. Most of the results are unsurprising. Given the region's continued reliance on Soviet-era infrastructure and processes, little in the way of wholesale energy independence has emerged. Estonia, however, proves to be the outlier with a strikingly low overall energy dependency rate, one far lower than the EU average of 53.2%. This is due to the country's oil shale industry, which is among the most developed in the world. The resource provides for over 85% of Estonia's electricity needs[8] and approximately 70% of its total energy needs.[9] Oil shale, though, is highly carbon-intensive, which raises questions over its long-term viability given the EU's emphasis on cleaner and renewable energy sources.[10] On the opposite end of the spectrum from Estonia is Lithuania, which has the greatest energy dependency of the three countries. Lithuania became highly energy dependent after 2009 when it shuttered the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant to comply with safety regulations required for EU accession. The facility was Lithuania's largest single source of energy, and its closure led to an over 60% spike in energy dependency the following year.[11]

Diversification of Import Sources

A recent European Commission study noted, "[a]ll other things being equal, the more diversified a country's energy mix is, the less likely it is to suffer from the impact of a supply shock affecting one specific energy source."[12]

Table 1. Energy Dependency

	Natural Gas	Total Petroleum Products	Solid Fuels	Overall Dependency
Estonia	100%	59.9%	-.1%	11.9%
Latvia	115.6%	100.4%	88.8%	55.9%
Lithuania	100%	93.2%	99.7%	78.3%

See Note 13.

*Energy dependency may be negative in the case of net exporter countries, while positive values over 100% indicate the accumulation of stocks during the reference year (as is the case with Latvia's natural gas storage facility.)

**This table is based on data from 2013, the most recent year available via Eurostat.

*** Energy dependency is calculated as net imports divided by the sum of gross inland energy consumption plus bunkers.

Diversification is a reflection of market concentration or the number of firms in a particular market and their respective shares of that market.[14] The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) serves as an aid to interpret market concentration.[15] The application of the HHI to energy imports, therefore, is a useful means to assess energy import diversification. Table 2 displays the HHI for imported primary energy resources. The results underscore the Baltic States' reliance on pipeline gas from Gazprom. The recent opening of the Klaipeda LNG facility,[16] as well as Latvia and Estonia's plans for similar facilities,[17] should eventually decrease this reliance, but to a yet undetermined extent. Concerning petroleum imports, the situation is more complex. Estonia, for instance, has a diverse supply. Although the same is true for the totality of Latvia's petroleum imports, Russia is still reported to supply most of the country's crude.

Lithuania, once again, is in the least advantageous position, relying almost completely on Russia.[18] The diversification of solid fuel imports will be discussed in the following subsection.

Table 2. Diversification of Energy Import Sources

	Natural Gas	Total Petroleum Products	Solid Fuels
Estonia	1	.28	.75
Latvia	1	.24	.67
Lithuania	1	.83	.86

See Note 19.

* The closer the value is to one, the less diversified that import source.

**Figures are based on a five-year aggregate (2008–2012).

Energy Mix

Energy mix (see Table 3) is measured using the Gross Inland Consumption (GIC) indicator, which is "the quantity of energy, expressed in oil equivalents, consumed within the national territory of a country" and "reflects the energy necessary to satisfy inland consumption within the limits of national territory."[20] This indicator provides critical context for the interpretation of dependency and diversification. For example, Latvia is highly dependent on imports to meet its needs for solid fuel (coal in this case) and receives the bulk of this supply from Russia. Although the combination of high dependency and low diversification might suggest that Latvia is very vulnerable, solid fuels account for less than two percent of the country's overall energy mix, meaning that a halt in coal supply from Russia would not be disastrous to Latvia's energy supply. Because renewables comprise nearly forty percent of Latvia's mix, largely due to a robust hydropower capacity,[21] the country's capacity to produce its own energy from renewable sources dwarfs its reliance on others through coal imports (thereby demonstrating the importance of energy mix to determine energy security).

Table 3. Energy Mix

	Natural Gas	Total Petroleum Products	Solid Fuels	Renewables
Estonia	8%	15.5%	64%	12.5%
Latvia	28%	33%	1.5%	37.5%
Lithuania	35.5%	40%	4.5%	20%

See Note 22.

*Excludes non-renewable waste and electricity.

**This table is based on data from 2013, the most recent year available via Eurostat.

***GIC calculations are in kilotons of oil equivalent (ktoe).

****GIC is calculated: primary production plus recovered products plus total imports plus variations of stocks minus total exports minus bunkers.

Electricity Generation and Usage

Power generation further illustrates the unique character of these energy economies (see Table 4). Estonia once again leads the pack due to its oil shale and is the only country to generate excess electricity. Latvia very nearly provides for its electricity needs, owing to hydropower plants along the Daugava River[23] but is still dependent on Russian gas for a full third of its generation. Lithuania continues to suffer from the closing of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, which initially made Lithuania reliant on Russia for over sixty percent of its generation. Today, Lithuania still only generates just over half of its needed electricity, with the remainder imported from its Baltic State neighbors, as well as Belarus and Russia (further deepening Lithuanian dependence on Russia.)[24]

Energy Profiles

Estonia's seemingly stellar performance on these indicators conceals a paradoxical weakness. Although the country is highly energy independent, its reliance on a single source creates a high-impact, low-probability vulnerability. Should Estonia deplete its supply of oil shale or have to abandon it due to climate change policies, it would become almost entirely dependent on imports, likely Russian gas. Even now, Estonia imports extra Russian gas stored in Latvia to meet its peak winter needs. Estonia's energy security remains strong only to the extent that there is no substantial drop in its use of oil shale; such a change would completely upend the country's energy flow.[26]

Table 4. Electricity Generation, Usage, and Balance

	Overall Production Sources	Gross Electricity Generation (GWh)	Total Consumption (GWh)/ Percentage by Industry	Excess or Deficit (GWh)
Estonia	Oil Shale: 86% Biofuels: ~8%	13,275	Total: 6,820 Industry: 31.5% Transport: <1% Household/Services: 67.5%	+6,455
Latvia	Gas: 33% Biofuels: ~5% Hydro: 60%	6,209	Total: 6,576 Industry: 27.5% Transport: <1% Household/Services: 70.5%	-367
Lithuania	Oil: ~5% Gas: 57% Biofuels: ~5% Hydro: ~19% Wind: ~11%	4,762	Total: 8,955 Industry: 33% Transport: <1% Household/Services: 66%	-4,193

See Note 25.

*The unit of measurement for generation and consumption is the gigawatt hour (GWh).

**Data on overall production sources are from the International Energy Agency's 2012 country profiles, the most recent on record. All other data are from 2013, the most recent year available via Eurostat.

***For overall production sources, this chart includes those that comprise approximately five percent or greater of total electricity production.

****This consumption stands for final energy consumption. Industry covers all industrial sectors with the exception of the energy sector, such as power stations, oil refineries, coke ovens, and all other installations transforming energy products into another form. Transport covers mainly the consumption by railways and electrified urban transport systems. Households/services cover quantities consumed by private households, small-scale industry, crafts, commerce, administrative bodies, and services with the exception of transportation, agriculture, and fishing.

Latvia has a balanced energy mix and a dependency rate only slightly higher than the EU average. Hydropower is clearly the country's primary strength. Nonetheless, a dependence on Russia persists, including an absolute reliance on Russian gas and, reportedly, a near complete reliance for crude (though the country could import from other suppliers via its Baltic Sea ports.)[27] Each of these sources comprises about a third of total consumption. Latvia's energy security is weaker than that of Estonia, and the country remains highly vulnerable to gas supply interruptions from Russia.[28]

Table 5. Russian Ownership in Gas Companies in the Baltic States as of December 2013

	Overall Russian Ownership	Russian Ownership by Company
Eesti Gass (Estonia)[32]	47%	37% Gazprom 10% Itera
Latvijas Gaze (Latvia)[33]	50%	34% Gazprom 16% Itera
Lietuvos Dujos (Lithuania)[34]	37%	37% Gazprom

Lithuania's energy supply is among the most vulnerable in the entire EU, largely due to the loss of its nuclear power plant—a move that took the country from being a net exporter to a net importer of electricity. As it stands, Lithuania is nearly eighty percent dependent on imports, of which Russia supplies eighty percent (including gas, oil, and solids.) Lithuania's energy security is the weakest of the Baltic States; the country is likewise the most reliant on Russian energy resources.[29]

The Political Dimensions of Energy

The use of economic indicators provides a sound quantitative framework in which to examine markets. This approach has made clear that although the modern Baltic States are all descended from Soviet lineage, albeit by way of occupation, each has a unique energy economy. Such metrics, however, do not provide a deeper understanding of the motivations of the players within the regional energy game. For this, one must examine regional political dimensions, in particular the divergent energy policies of the EU and Russia and how these competing interests interact in the Baltic States.

Through a legislative initiative known as the Third Energy Package, the EU sought market liberalization via the "unbundling," the separation of the generation of electricity and gas from their transmission and distribution, as well as a Union-wide network of regulatory authorities.[30] For the Baltic States, this meant confronting the extent of Russian ownership in national energy companies, particularly those in the gas business.[31] Table 5 displays the levels of Russian ownership of Baltic State gas companies at the end of 2013.

The EU presented its members with various liberalization options. Estonia and Latvia "opted for the 'independent transmission operator' (ITO) option, which was the least stringent and the most [favorable] option for Gazprom."[35] As a result, the 2013 figures for Eesti Gass and Latvijas Gaze remain the same, as of the publication of this report. Hence, Russia continues to supply all of Estonia and Latvia's gas and also continues to own half, or nearly half, of the companies that control gas transmission and distribution within these two countries. Lithuania, on the other hand, chose the "most stringent Commission-preferred" option and successfully completed gas unbundling in 2014.[36] As a result, Gazprom (as well as German energy company E.ON Ruhrgas) sold all of its shares in Lietuvos Dujos. In addition, a separate Lithuanian company, Amber Grid, took over gas transmission services. Both companies currently have approximately ninety-six percent Lithuanian ownership.[37]

Another EU initiative, known as the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP), aims to create "a fully functioning and integrated energy market in the region, supported by the necessary infrastructure."[38] The plan focuses, in part, on regulatory harmonization but also includes schemes to promote more diversified access to electricity and gas networks. Although the Baltic States produce much of their own electricity, this power flows through a legacy Soviet power grid that is still controlled by Moscow. Efforts to connect the Baltic States to

other regional grids are underway with two operational cables between Estonia and Finland, and multiple other connections are planned. The BEMIP also plans for new gas pipelines (ones that do not originate in Russia), as well as LNG facilities in Estonia and Latvia to complement the now operational LNG terminal in Klaipeda, Lithuania.[39]

In stark contrast to the EU's vision for diversification and liberalization of energy supply, Russia views its energy exports as instruments of state power. To this end, Moscow pursues vertical integration, exploits bilateral relationships, and devises infrastructure plans that bypass transit countries, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, to supply downstream consumers directly.[40] Russia has also displayed a willingness to endure financial losses to achieve political gains.[41] For example, "[b]etween 1998 and 2000 there were nine interruptions of crude oil supplies to Lithuania's Mazeikiu refinery as Russia tried to prevent its sale to an American operator. In 2006, shortly after the refinery had been sold again, this time to Poland's PKN Orlen, Transneft cut off supply after a pipeline explosion and never restored it."[42] In fact, each of the Baltic States has experienced numerous stoppages of oil, gas, and other energy resources, as well as sudden price hikes when leaders refused to kowtow to Russian demands, economic and otherwise. For instance, in the early 1990s, Russia increased energy prices in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to extend its military basing rights in the Baltic States. In 2007, following the Bronze Statue incident, Russian Railways "cited planned track repairs and halted rail deliveries of Russian crude oil, gasoline and other resources to Estonia."[43]

Russia's status as an energy behemoth grants the country considerable muscle in negotiations with other governments. Nonetheless, disunity among European nations likely affords Moscow additional latitude. The Baltic States, for their part, do not present a unified bloc, nor are they completely in sync with EU policies. A combination of domestic political fragmentation and ongoing Russian influence in political and economic sectors precludes these states from making more decisive progress away from Russian dependency.[44] Furthermore, discord is present at the EU level. Many European governments signed decades-long contracts with Russian energy companies, which have in turn invested heavily in the economies of these countries. This is consistent with the Russian government's official energy strategy, which lists as an objective the "strengthening of positions of leading Russian energy companies abroad.[45] For example, both Gerhardt Schröder and Angel Merkel supported the Nord Stream pipeline (which bypasses the Baltic States and Poland to supply Germany directly) as well as closer relations between German and Russian companies.[46] Moreover, former Chancellor Schröder now serves as Chairman of the Shareholders' Committee at Nord Stream.[47] In other words, competing national and commercial interests serve to dilute Brussels' message of unity, which presents Russia with greater space in which to maneuver.

Collaborative Analysis Event Insight:

In the areas of energy and economics, Russia holds considerable instruments of power in energy (particularly gas exports) but has no significant economic levers outside of the energy sector. Each Baltic State has a different energy profile, and as such, each has a different degree of energy dependence on Russia. Nonetheless, Russia has leverage in terms of gas supply, and all three Baltic States are vulnerable to Russian gas interruptions. There is little strategic cooperation on energy policies between the Baltic States themselves, as well as between the Baltic States and the EU. Russia views energy exports as an instrument of national power and is wiling to accept financial loss for political gain. In the long term, Russia seeks to cut out transit states by building infrastructure that bypasses NATO and EU-aligned Eastern European countries altogether.

Field Research Observations

Energy experts in the Baltic States identified the protection of critical infrastructure as integral to defense against hybrid warfare like that witnessed in Ukraine. In particular, they used the example of Russia destroying railroads that carried coal into and out of Ukraine, but leaving coal mines functioning so that they could sell the coal Ukrainian companies had mined back to Ukraine. Another example was the coopting and occupation of control stations so they possessed full control over energy in the country. Insofar as these lessons relate to the Baltic States, these experts identified Estonia and Latvia as in similar positions to Ukraine based on the location of most of its heavy industry in the east of the country. In the case of Estonia, that industry and power infrastructure are run and manned by eastern Estonians. While it is unclear how eastern Estonians as a group perceive the central government in Tallinn and the government in Moscow, they have made public news by threatening to walk off the job over a wage dispute. However, these concerns may be unwarranted because the electrical grids in the Baltics and Russia date from the Soviet era when they were designed as a single system. Accordingly, their electrical grids are interdependent, and if Russia were to cut off transmissions to the Baltic States, it would cut off itself as well. A similar vulnerability for Russia lies in the fact that energy for Kaliningrad currently comes through Lithuania, so Lithuania could cease gas transmission to Kaliningrad as retaliation in the event of hybrid warfare. Russia is currently working to end its electrical grid interdependence with the Baltic States by strengthening its own lines so that it can regulate frequency without the Baltic States transmission lines. The Baltic States are also pursuing routes of less energy dependence on Russia as they engage in agreements and connections with their neighbors to the north and south.

Conclusion

The Baltic States gained independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and sought to calcify this break with Moscow by attaining membership in the EU and NATO in 2004. In contrast to such decisive political moves, the region's energy infrastructure and supply chain have proven far more resistant to change. The Baltic States remain largely dependent on Russia's westward flow of natural gas and, to a lesser extent, its maritime and rail shipments of crude, coal, and other resources. Even so, each of these three nations has a unique energy profile, and by extension, each has a different level of susceptibility to Moscow's coercive use of energy exports. Such nuance is further compounded by political factors, in particular Europe's fissures in regional and supranational solidarity. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, it seems, occupy what can be described simultaneously as the frontline and the backwater of a clash between the Euro-Atlantic alliance and Russian assertion of its sphere of influence.

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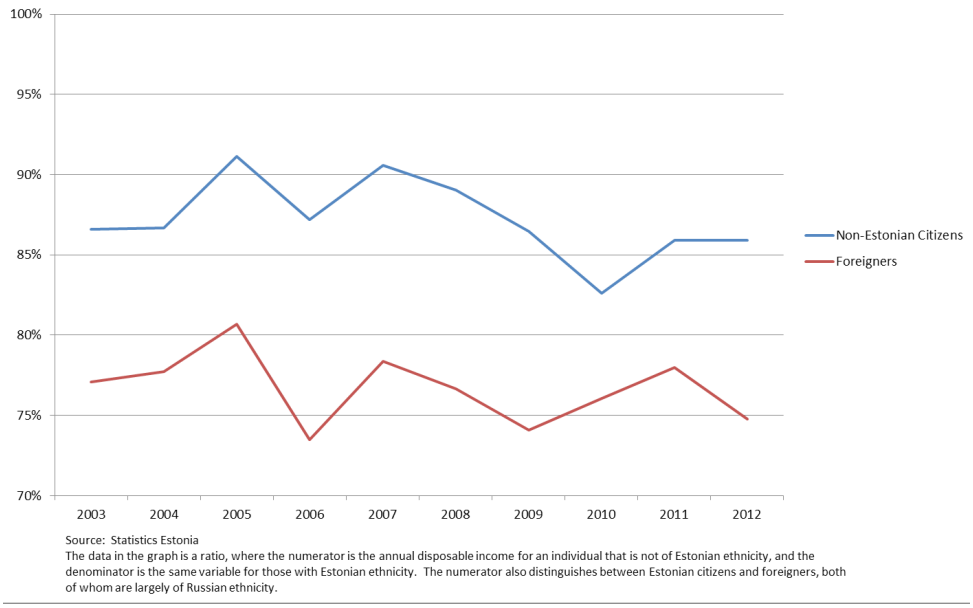
43. Ibid.; Agnia Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power,", 5; Karen Smith Stegen, "Deconstructing the ''Energy Weapon'': Russia's Threat to Europe as Case Study," *Energy Policy* 39, no. 10 (2011): 6505-13; Randall Newnham, "Oil, Carrots, and Sticks: Russia's Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 134-43.
44. Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power."
45. Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation, *Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030*, (Moscow: Institute of Energy Strategy, 2010).
46. Lough, *Russia's Energy Diplomacy*.
47. Nord Stream website, http://www.nord-stream.com/about-us/our-management/ (accessed May 2015).

Economy

In matters of economics, one of the main potential vulnerabilities of the Baltic countries to the Russian use of hybrid warfare would be the existence of any economic grievances on the part of the large Russian minority populations. Economic grievances may contribute to an overall sense of alienation toward both state and nation; by nation, we mean the dominant ethnic group in Estonia (ethnic Estonians) and Latvia (ethnic Latvians). This section focuses on Estonia and Latvia because of their higher numbers of Russian compatriot populations compared to Lithuania. Additionally, citizenship in those countries depends on official state language facility, unlike in Lithuania, and so, in turn, do economic opportunities. Alienated Russian minorities that do not identify culturally or politically with their home Baltic country and in turn identify either overtly or privately more with Russia may, in the eyes of Russian planners, represent potential fifth-columnists that can be mobilized politically (or militarily) to agitate against the Baltic States.

Economic Circumstances of Russian Compatriots

A key component of potential grievances is the employment and economic outcomes of the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia, and in this regard, there are some worrying trends, particularly in Estonia. As shown in Figure 5, there has been a persistent earnings gap between ethnic Estonians and Russians:



Annual disposable income of non-ethnic Estonians and foreigners as a percentage of ethnic Estonians.

Figure 5. Ethnic Earnings Gap in Estonia

Figure 5 shows there is both a citizenship and nationality "tax" that is paid by members of the Russian minority in Estonia; non-ethnic Estonian citizens (primarily Russians) have less disposable income than their ethnic Estonian counterparts, while foreigners (again, primarily Russians) have even less. For instance, in 2012, the disposable income of non-Estonian citizens was eighty-six percent of that of ethnic Estonians, while for foreigners, the corresponding percentage was seventy-five percent.

A similar disparity is seen in unemployment rates, as shown in Figure 6. Since 1997, those with an Estonian ethnic background experienced a lower unemployment rate than members of other ethnic groups (both citizen and non-citizen, again primarily Russians). This disparity reached a low of 3.2 percent in 2007 but increased to 10.2 percent in 2010 following the onset of the global financial crisis in late 2008.

Another worrisome trend has been indications that inequality in labor market outcomes is being reproduced inter-generationally. Many ethnic Russians arrived in Estonia during the Soviet period and took jobs in the military-industrial sector, which suffered following independence and the transition away from a command economy.[1] While the effects of the transition are still being felt by first-generation Russians, some second-generation Russians born in Estonia are also experiencing negative labor market outcomes relative to ethnic Estonians of a similar age cohort. Compared to ethnic Estonians in the eighteen to thirty-five age bracket, ethnic Russian male citizens of Estonia earned ninety percent of the average net income for this age cohort, while women earned fifty-seven percent (Estonian women earned eighty-one percent, and Estonian men one hundred and fourteen percent of the average).[2] Additionally, ethnic Russians in this age cohort were relatively less likely to have reached a managerial level, with one in fourteen reporting to have reached this level, compared with one in six overall for this age cohort.[3] However, ethnic Russians with excellent written communication skills in Estonian enjoyed career and income prospects equal to those of ethnic Estonians.[4]

Similar, although less pronounced, patterns are evident in Latvia. Hazans noted that minority workers in Latvia earned on average eight to nine percent less than ethnic Latvians between 2002 and 2009.[5] However, for males in the private sector, the gap in 2007 was only 1.6 percent (for males in the public sector, the gap was 9.6 percent), and the largest gap in 2007 was found among female workers in the public sector, who earned

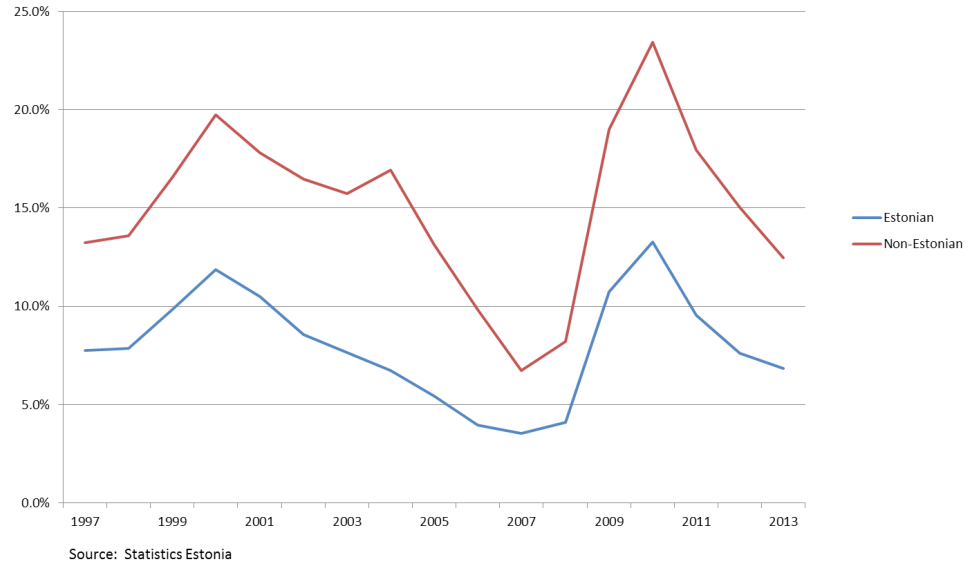


Figure 6. Total Unemployment Rate in Estonia

twenty-one percent less than their ethnic Latvian counterparts (for females in the private sector, the gap was smaller, at 7.4 percent).[6] Interestingly, when one controls for a variety of human capital and demographic factors, the remaining "unexplained" gap, which accounts for wage disparities due to language skills, citizenship status, other ethnic differences, and possibly discrimination, is essentially non-existent for both males and females in the private sector and for males in the public sector.[7,8] In the case of Estonia, the unexplained ethnic wage gap for males was around twenty percent for 2000–2004 but dropped to fourteen percent in 2005.[9] Regarding unemployment, Hazans noted that male and female unemployment rates in Latvia were approximately 1.5 times higher among minorities (both citizens and non-citizens).[10,11]

Trade and Investment Relationships

Another potential economic entryway for Russia to exhibit influence and wage hybrid warfare is through leveraging trade and investment relationships. Specifically, Russia could threaten a trade embargo against a wayward state, pass legislation that freezes assets or bars further investment, or, at the extreme, place political and legal pressure on Russian investors to divest their holdings of Baltic investments. Economic and financial interactions may therefore form a dependency that may impact foreign policy calculations in targeted countries. In this regard, it may come as a surprise to outside observers that, despite geography, the economic links between Russia and both Estonia and Latvia, particularly outside of the energy and transit sectors, are noticeably less extensive than the latter two countries' links with the West. For instance, in 2014, Russia purchased ten percent of Estonia's exports, less than the amount purchased by Sweden (eighteen percent), Finland (fifteen percent), and Latvia (eleven percent) and far less than the share purchased by the EU (seventy-two percent).[12] In terms of imports, Russian exports (both energy and non-energy) accounted for six percent of total Estonian imports, far less than the share accounted for by the EU.[13,14] Outside of energy, Russia is an important source of wood, furniture, chemicals, and metal, and it is an important market for Estonian electrical machinery, tanning/dyeing extracts, dairy products, as well as transport and tourism exports. Of note is the fact that approximately eighty percent of the goods passing through the Port of Tallinn are from Russia, and eighty percent of these goods arrive at the port by rail.[15] Additionally, Estonia's electricity network is physically connected to Russia's in a joint power ring that also includes Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia.[16]

By the end of the first quarter of 2015, Estonian investment in Russia accounted for four percent of Estonian investment abroad, and Russian investment in Estonia represented 5.5 percent of total foreign investment in Estonia.[17] The Russian share of investment in Estonia may actually be higher because some Russian investment originates from other countries.[18] One-third of Russian investment in Estonia is directed toward the transit sector; Russian capital accounts for fifty to 100 percent of invested funds in the terminals at the Port of Muugu, and Russian capital owns half the Port of Sillamäe.[19] Additionally, some claim that Russians own up

to one-third of Estonian transit companies.[20] Do such trends in Russian trade and investment with Estonia translate into political influence? Despite a noticeable Russian presence in Estonia's transportation sector, the relatively low levels of Russian trade and investment in Estonia seem to support the assertion by Tüür and Vare that "the political influence of Russia on Estonia based on economic considerations has remained insignificant…pressure used to secure [Russia's] interests [and] is perceived as weak or immaterial."[21]

Similar patterns in trade and investment flows also characterize the economic relationship between Latvia and Russia. In December 2014, Latvia's exports to Russia accounted for 11.3 percent of total exports, while Russian imports represented 9.9 percent of total imports.[22] In comparison, the EU accounted for seventy-one percent of Latvia's exports and 77.7 percent of imports.[23] Merchandise exports to Russia largely consist of prepared foodstuffs, chemical products, and machinery and mechanical appliances, while merchandise imports largely consist of oil and gas, as well as base metals.[24] Russia, though, plays an important role in Latvia's transportation and logistics sector. Prior to the construction of the Primorsk port in northern Russia in 2001, Russia exported thirteen to fifteen percent of its oil through the port of Ventspils, and Russian transit fees accounted for twenty to twenty-five percent of the Latvian gross domestic product (GDP) in the 1990s.[25] Today, Russia still plays an important role in Latvia's transit sector. Prior to the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, eighty-four percent of Latvia's income in the transit sector was associated with Russia and the CIS countries, and as of 2012, eighty percent of all freight cargo at the Port of Riga originates from Russia and the CIS.[26]

Russia is also a prominent investor in Latvia, although not as important as other countries. As of the first quarter of 2015, Russia accounted for seven percent of the stock of foreign direct investment in Latvia, placing it behind Sweden (twenty percent) and the Netherlands (eight percent) and on par with Cyprus (seven percent).[27] However, some of the investment from Cyprus may in fact be of Russian origin.[28] Most Russian investment is concentrated in the energy, finance brokerage, and real estate sectors.[29]

As in the case of Estonia, Russia's economic and financial influence outside of the transit and energy sectors in Latvia is smaller than expected based solely on geography. Hence, its ability to support economically-based hybrid warfare efforts outside of these sectors appears limited.

Field Research Observations

During formal interviews, respondents did not identify many specific instances of economic influence or opportunities for influence. They did, however, note a few incidents that exemplify economic influence that Russia attempts to exert and certain tense relationships. For instance, one respondent referred to the Moscow money scandal in Estonia as demonstrative of Russia's efforts to gain influence in Estonian politics. That scandal featured the Estonian intelligence service accusing Centre Party leader Edgar Savisaar of accepting money from the Kremlin through a non-government organization (NGO) led by Vladimir Yakunin, head of the state-owned Russian Railways and former first directorate KGB officer. That scandal occurred in 2010, however, and the experts interviewed did not identify more recent incidents. Several interviewees spoke about the close Russian business ties in the transit and logistics industries. For instance, Russian Railways owns half of the shares of logistics company Liepajas Oil Transit. Indeed, some respondents remarked that while ethnic Balts controlled politics, ethnic Russians controlled some sectors of the economy, providing opportunity for undue influence.

Aside from significant business connections, observation in the field revealed that lower-wage jobs were held predominantly by Russian speakers. Informal interviewees remarked on the difficulty of finding a job without knowing the home-state language, Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian. Some informal interviewees made clear that they were unable to find jobs despite having university degrees because they did not speak the home-state language at all or well enough. According to these respondents and some formal interviewees, to be competitive in today's job market in the Baltic States required speaking the home-state language, and speaking the home-state language as well as Russian would make one more competitive than speaking only

Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian. In Daugavpils and Rezekne, there were markets and stores, in which most merchants spoke only Russian, that were located next to but visibly separated from mainstream stores. There appeared to be a class division based on language capacity, wherein those who spoke only Russian earned less than those who spoke Russian and the home-state language. Perhaps most important, that division was visible in signs and structures, as well as easily identified through interaction. In this way, field observation confirms the literature and statistics demonstrating grounds for Russian minority populations to hold an economic grievance.

Notes

1. Estonian Cooperation Agency. *Estonian Human Development Report 2007* (Tallinn: Eesti Ekspressi Kirjastuse AS, 2008), 47-48.
2. Ibid, 100.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 100-101.
5. Mihails Hazans, "Ethnic Minorities in the Latvian Labor Market, 1997 – 2009: Outcomes, Integration Drivers and Barriers," in Nils Muižnieks, *How Integrated is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2010), 142.
6. Ibid.
7. Some of the controls include those for gender, educational attainment, age, marital status, economic sector and job location. See Hazans, "Ethnic Minorities in the Latvian Labor Market, 1997 – 2009," 142.
8. Ibid., 138, 142-143.
9. Kristian-Olari Leping and Ott Toomet, "Emerging Ethnic Wage Gap: Estonia During Political and Economic Transition," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36, 4 (2008): 611-612.
10. Hazans, "Ethnic Minorities in the Latvian Labor Market, 1997 – 2009," 140-141.
11. Interestingly, one should note that despite the relatively poorer labor market outcomes for the Russian minority in Estonia, socio-economic inequality and stratification is less pronounced in Estonia than Latvia due to higher social spending in Estonia compared to Latvia. Thus, while the Russian minority in Estonia experiences poorer labor market outcomes than their Latvian counterpart, they have access to more social security benefits, which may limit the intensity of any economic grievances felt by this population. See Nils Muiznieks, Juris Rozenvalds and Ieva Birka, "Ethnicity and Social Cohesion in the post-Soviet Baltic States," *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, 3 (2013): 299-300.
12. "Last Year Estonia Exported Goods Worth 12.1 Billion Euros," Statistics Estonia, http://www.stat.ee/90681 (accessed February 22, 2015).
13. Ibid.
14. The volume of bilateral trade between Estonia and Russia may actually be several times higher on account of transit goods, which are goods transported through a country without any value added. See "The Estonian Economy: Estonia's Economic Linkages with Russia," Swedbank, April 14, 2014 http://www.swedbank-research.com/english/estonian_economy/2014/april/ee_newsletter_ru_final.pdf (accessed February 22, 2015).
15. K. Tüür and Raivo Vare, "Estonia-Russia-Belarus: The Political Implications of Economic Relations," in Andris Spruds ed., *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities* (Riga: SIA Apgads Mantojums, 2012), 273.
16. Ibid., 274.
17. "Direct Investment Position in Estonia and Abroad by Country (EUR million)," Eesti Pank, http://statistika.eestipank.ee/?lng=en#listMenu/2293/treeMenu/MAKSEBIL_JA_INVPOS/146 (accessed June 16, 2015).
18. Tüür and Vare, "Estonia-Russia-Belarus," 264.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 265.
21. Ibid., 280.
22. "In December Share of Exports in the Latvian Foreign Trade Continued to Decline," Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia, February 9, 2015 (accessed February 23, 2015).
23. Ibid.
24. Nils Muižnieks, *Latvian-Russian Relations: Dynamics Since Latvia's Accession to the EU and NATO* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2011), 52-53.
25. Arvils Zeltinš, "Business Interests in the Latvia-Russia Economic Relationship," in Andris Spruds ed., *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities* (Riga: SIA Apgads Mantojums, 2012), 118.
26. Ibid., 118, 137.
27. Bank of Latvia, FDI Data by Country Tables, http://statdb.bank.lv/lb/Data.aspx?id=128 (accessed June 16, 2015).
28. Andrejs Jakobsons, "The Economic Dimension of Bilateral Relationships Between Latvia, Russia and Belarus – Past and Present," in Andris Spruds ed., *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities* (Riga: SIA Apgads Mantojums, 2012), 29-30.
29. Zeltinš, "Business Interests in the Latvia-Russia Economic Relationship," 127.

Information

Media constitute an integral component of Russia's soft power influence in the Baltic States, indeed globally. In recent years, President Putin consolidated state control over domestic Russian media, and Russian media companies continue to make inroads into the Baltic States, offering programs that are sometimes cheaper and usually higher quality than their Baltic counterparts. The result has been an information environment bifurcated between Russian and non-Russian media, including international channels like CNN and BBC as well as local Baltic stations. As Russian media delivers messaging that denigrates the Baltic States and specifically the situation of Russian compatriot populations, and promotes a positive view of Russia, the aims appear to divide Baltic and EU communities and unite Russian-speaking communities.

Media Consumption

In Estonia, Estonians and non-Estonians live in separate media spaces.[1] Approximately seventy percent of Russian speakers read newspapers and fifty-eight percent read magazines regularly.[2] These readers have three Russian-language newspapers published in Estonia to choose from, though several Russian-language dailies have closed in recent years. The Estonian newspaper *Postimees* publishes a Russian-language version three times a week and has a united staff, including the same editor-in-chief.[3] Radio also provides a popular source of information for the Estonian population, with approximately sixty-six percent of Estonians and only slightly fewer Russians listening daily. Five Estonian stations broadcast in Russian, and residents of the Ida-Viru county in the northeast can receive broadcasts from radio stations inside Russia. Additionally, the media project by Russian state company Rossiya Segodnya, known as Sputnik, is intended to include radio stations in over thirty countries.[4] Television presents the most divided media space: Estonians choose between Kanal2, TV3, and ETV, all in Estonian language, while non-Estonians choose between First Baltic Channel (PBK), NTV Mir, and RTR Planeta. PBK stands out as the most popular Russian television, and importantly, it rebroadcasts domestic Russian shows and newscasts in the Baltic States. Baltic Russians who watch this channel view the same programs and receive the same information as is produced by the state-controlled domestic media in Russia. PBK receives the highest amount of trust from the non-Estonian audience, while significant trust is also placed in the portal rus.delfi.ee, which is an Estonian Russian-language outfit as opposed to the Russia-based PBK. Web media continue to gain ground as a popular source for information, and while Estonian web publications, such as rus.delfi.ee, rus.postimees.ee, and mke.ee, are available in Russian, the most popular among non-Estonian populations remain the Russian websites mail.ru and odnoklassniki.ru.[5]

In Latvia, as of 2013, three Russian television channels are among the most popular in the country: RTR Planeta, PBK, and NTV Mir.[6] Russian channels and programs tend to out-compete Latvian channels by offering a wider range and higher quality of entertainment. Survey research in 2011 found that those who speak Russian at home prefer Russian television channels and find them to be more trustworthy. Only 8.9 percent of respondents said they found the Latvian Society channel to be trustworthy.[7] Radio remains a popular source of information for Russian speakers in Latvia, but unlike television, the most popular radio station has been the Russian-language version of Latvia's public radio station.[8] However, Latvian public radio faces challenges from the internationally broadcast Russian radio station Russkoje and the more recent Sputnik media project. Printed media produced in Russia appears to be losing ground to local newspapers. For instance, the local free newspaper, *5 min*, receives the most Russian-speaking readers of all dailies in Riga and publishes identical content in Latvian and Russian. In the eastern region of Latgale, the audience for local publications is much larger than the audience for national dailies.[9]

In Lithuania, the introduction of digital television platforms in 2012 has siphoned viewers away from previously mainstream television channels.[10] These digital television platforms offer alternative channels in Russian, and their rise has coincided with a decline in viewership of the two main Lithuanian channels, LNK and TV3. When their revenues declined following

the 2008 financial crisis, Lithuanian channels began to purchase and broadcast more Russian programs because they were cheaper.[11] Accordingly, while Russian channels have lower viewership shares than in Estonia and Latvia, Lithuanian viewership of Russian programs could be increasing through Lithuanian channels that purchase and broadcast Russian programming. Russian printed media in Lithuania is said to be in decline, but the most popular Russian daily, *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, introduced a weekly tailored for the Lithuanian audience in 2008.[12] In major cities where large portions of the Russian-speaking populations reside, Russian radio stations are very popular, such as Russkoje Radijo Baltija in Vilnius and Radio Raduga in Klaipeda.[13] When it comes to trusting media for news, a divide emerges that appears to be along ethnic lines. The Russian and Polish minorities favor PBK for news about Lithuania, while ethnic Lithuanians prefer Lithuanian channels.

Literature shows that the Russian compatriot populations in the Baltic States largely choose to reside in an information space produced or broadcast by Russian companies. Indeed, polls demonstrate greater trust by those populations in Russian sources over Western. This is troublesome for the Baltic States because the content and messaging of those sources creates an alternative reality in which the Baltic governments, NATO, the EU, and the United States are all villains, and Russia is a protector. Importantly, this message identifies those actors as threats not only to Russians but to the well-being of the Baltic States. Messages disparaging social and economic policies as detrimental to those countries can undermine confidence and trust in Baltic governments and organizations like the EU. Confidence and trust in one's government is based on perception, and Russian media is cultivating a perception that the Baltic governments are making negative decisions for their populations because they joined the EU and NATO. As representative democracies that ultimately depend on the public to determine their direction, these perceptions will prove dangerous if they continue unchallenged.

Currently, the capability of the Baltic States to challenge Russian media appears to be limited by resources, as Russia spends nearly three-hundred million U.S. dollars a year on its media and eight Russian universities maintain programs on information operations. Another obstacle for the Baltic States in stemming the Russian media onslaught resides in the legal environment in each country. At the end of the Soviet era, all three countries enshrined the protection of free speech and free press in their constitutions.[14] Each country also chose to enact laws and regulations that created a liberal environment for the media.[15] In Estonia, laws regarding ownership concentration have not been well enforced and do not cover all foreseeable circumstances of consolidating ownership.[16] This undermines Estonia's ability to challenge large, concentrated Russian media holding companies. Similarly, in Lithuania, an absence of antitrust legislation covering the media allows both monopolies and cross ownership,[17] in turn permitting Russian media companies to establish dominance. In all three Baltic States, systems for holding media accountable are reportedly ineffective. For instance, the "notice-and-take-down" policy in Estonia relies on readers to report user-generated comments that editorial boards are then supposed to remove.[18] Overall, while the push to end censorship and state-controlled media has established an abundantly free media environment in all three Baltic States, it has also opened opportunity for large players to dominate that environment as well as to disseminate biased and inaccurate information and perspectives. It is vital, therefore, to examine the content of Russian information efforts in the Baltic States.[19] Russian media in the region focuses on denigrating the Baltic States, the EU, and NATO and promoting the Russian Federation and its historical antecedent, the Soviet Union.

Portrayal of the Baltic States

Typical Russian media coverage of Russian-speaking populations in this portion of Russia's "near abroad" is dominated by ethnic controversies, historical disputes on World War II, and alleged memorialization of Nazi SS officers who fought against the Soviet Union. Moderate media voices note that conditions for Russians living in the Baltic States are no worse than in any other country in the EU but still insist that ethnic discrimination, unequal conditions, and psychological pressure persist in an environment of cultural disdain for Russians as threats to ethnic nationalism.

The persistent state-sponsored narratives are graver than those moderate voices and claim that open discrimination against Russians and unresolved issues in the Baltic States pose a perpetual threat of interethnic conflict. Estonia and Latvia are especially highlighted in news and editorials as suspicious of their Russian populations being fifth columns. The Russian press calls out reforms in Estonia and Latvia relating to language, such as the requirement that sixty percent of instruction in public schools be in the home-state language, as politicized and meant to culturally subjugate Russian-speakers. Alleged "Russophobia" is portrayed as intentionally fomented by politicians in the Baltic States for cynical reasons, and as a cultural wedge between the Baltic region and the rest of Western Europe.

Russians in the Baltic States are portrayed as economically and politically subjugated in ghetto conditions, a situation depicted as ignored by the West but heroically challenged by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Russian media in the Baltics argue that non-citizens in Latvia have only limited rights, and those in Estonia are effectively non-persons with no rights due to ongoing citizenship issues. Minority issues in Estonia are highlighted in Russian media even during positive diplomatic developments. Latvian political legitimacy is repeatedly questioned amid accusations of undemocratic inequality, low voter turnout, media restrictions, and ethnic voting. Even within moderate characterizations, Baltic Russians are allegedly given the choice between self-imposed political marginalization by maintaining loyalty to Russia or the acceptance of integration by restricting their link to the homeland to a mere cultural-social legacy. Russia's visa policies for non-citizens in the Baltics are portrayed as a response by Russia to remind the compatriots in the Baltic States that they are Russians first, and only then Baltic.

Historical controversies and alleged revisionism are characterized as an extension of Russo-phobic discrimination, exemplified in media escalations surrounding the 2007 Bronze Soldier controversy and riots in Estonia. Russian press portrary policies banning or removing Soviet imagery as nationalistic and barbaric; as desecrations aimed at Russians and that deserve broad retaliation from the Russian government. Accusations against Estonia of violent suppression and fascism, as well as comparisons with Nazi occupation, were also given prominent coverage throughout the 2007 controversy. This "Estonian syndrome" has also been attributed to similar controversies in Latvia, likewise invoking a specter of neo-Nazism.

Since the 2007 controversy, there has been an overarching narrative in Russian media of "Nazification" in the Baltic States. In the pseudo-historical documentary "The Hidden Story of the Baltic States," the crimes of provisional governments under Nazi occupation are interpreted in continuity with the modern Baltic governments, accusing Baltic elites of pursuing a "policy of national segregation and the glorification of Nazis."[20] The film also draws strong comparisons between state actions during the riots following the Bronze Soldier controversy and the Holocaust, claiming protestors were arrested and taken to concentration camps. Insinuations that there is a trend to extol Nazism in the Baltic States dominate Russian headlines during diplomatic tensions. Russian media repeatedly cover annual marches recognizing local veterans of the Waffen-SS and feature them heavily in propaganda to suggest a rising tide of neo-Nazism coming to power in the Baltic States. Russia uses these accusations to support an overarching narrative that Europe should distance itself from the Baltic States because they are dangerously nationalistic.

On the international stage, the Baltic States are portrayed in Russian media as provocative, tone deaf, and marginal, seeking out persistent, irrational conflict with Russia. This combative posture is then allegedly exploited by the West to pressure Moscow and spread anti-Russian propaganda. In this way, the Baltic States are portrayed as vassals of the United States without their own foreign policies. During times of improving relations between the EU and Russia, the Baltic States are portrayed as an obstacle to Russian-EU relations. The Baltic States are accused both of instigating conflict between the West and Russia for their own benefit, as well as inciting and supporting insurrection and separatism inside Russia.

"Old Europe" and the EU

Russian media narratives about the EU (sometimes specified as the countries of "Old Europe" or "the old world") vary. Larger members of the EU are often portrayed as a moderating influence on the allegedly sensationalist anti-Russian governments of Central and Eastern Europe, pushing the latter toward reasonable compromise during crises. In this context, the EU is at times praised in the media by Medvedev and Putin, who appeal to sensible European leaders not to indulge fringe members and instead favor responsible approaches to relations. However, the EU is also criticized as being blind to the alleged threat of fascism and nationalism among its easternmost members. Overall, the EU is painted as a paper tiger, too economically unstable and dependent on Russia to exert pressure or push back Russian influence. The EU's pragmatism is, in this light, portrayed as weakness. Unable to escalate sanctions out of dependence on Russian energy and fear of price hikes, EU responses are portrayed as empty attempts to project only the appearance of power and taking action.

The EU is portrayed very negatively in relation to its Eastern Partnership initiative, which is cast as economically exploitative and destructive. The protectionist tone suggests that EU integration would be economically disastrous for Eastern European countries, rendering them penniless while carrying no promise of full EU membership. The primary allegation is that the EU compels participation by inciting fear of Russia to effectively annex Eastern European markets without providing economic protections. This exploitation is discussed as a cause of growing Euroscepticism and the rise of the Harmony Party in Latvia, which is discussed in the Society and Politics section. Despite all of this, the EU is portrayed as impressionable rather than nefarious, trapped under U.S. influence and forced to sacrifice its own interests to serve geopolitical machinations out of Washington. The United States is seen as fearing a Russian-EU partnership and trying to intimidate the EU into compliance. Undesirable EU actions are also attributed to Eastern European members manipulating the EU from within. These influences are often accused of levelling unfair accusations and criticisms against Russia, causing an unnecessarily adversarial or obstructionist posture among EU members.

The United States and NATO

NATO and the United States are portrayed with deep distrust and suspicion as pursuing an inherently anti-Russian foreign policy, in which NATO is merely the representation of American might in Europe and is almost exclusively concerned with weakening Russia. Despite formal Russian-NATO relations and cooperation, the alliance has allegedly nevertheless failed to establish an equal partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation, only turning to Russia when Moscow acquiesces to U.S. policy goals. When Russia did not succumb to the wishes of the United States and leading NATO countries in the Ukrainian crisis, NATO allegedly launched a new Cold War and reinstituted policies of deterrence against Moscow.

The specter of direct NATO actions against Russia is often invoked in Russian media reports, even to the point of considering NATO expansion (allegedly under U.S. direction) an existential threat. According to Russian media, NATO not only seeks to surround Russia in a strategy that allegedly poses a threat to global stability, but also enlisted Eastern European countries (the Baltic States, Ukraine) in a propaganda campaign for regime change in Russia, an objective claimed to be openly embraced by American and Western European leaders. The nations of Central and Eastern Europe are portrayed as only instruments in NATO's alleged geopolitical schemes. In a similar manner, nations courted for NATO membership are portrayed as important to the West only as they may be used to intimidate Russia.

The United States is condemned in Russian media as acting in a unilateral fashion through NATO to intervene around the world. This Russian perception of the United States constructing a monopolar world order around itself, while bypassing the United Nations (UN) Security Council and ignoring Russia, is allegedly pursued through preparations for war with anyone who disagrees, especially Russia. America is portrayed as lacking political and military self-restraint, and NATO as aggressive and warmongering because it is existentially dependent on instability

Collaborative Analysis Event Insight:

The group agreed that Russia engages in persistent information warfare as a tool of mass manipulation, propagating various strategic narratives to undermine Western security and economic institutions. Russian media narratives concerning the Baltic States insist that they are not fully-valued members of Western alliances but were merely admitted due to their strategic proximity to Rusisa and that the more powerful members of both NATO and the EU will not defend them. At the same time, the EU is portrayed as a source of economic failure, moral bankruptcy, and unwholesome social values, while the United States and NATO are framed as aggressive interventionists that cause chaos wherever they involve themselves (e.g., Iraq and Libya). The group also noted that Russian-language media in the Baltic States comes almost exclusively from Moscow, and Baltic media companies offer no strong Russian-language alternatives. This media dominance is owed in part to the higher quality of Russian programs, including news, entertainment, and sports. It was agreed that high-quality Russian-language programming needs to be offered in the Batlic States to provide alternative viewpoints to the Kremlin's.

in Europe (i.e., if there were peace in Europe, NATO would not need to exist). NATO and the United States are also portrayed as inherently dishonest on issues of international missile defense and the reset of foreign policy toward Russia, feigning partnership while simultaneously threatening Russian security interests. The alleged betrayal of several promises against NATO expansion is also a popular point of contention in state-associated media narratives. However, despite the Russian media's ominous portrayal of NATO, outlets have more recently gloated amid crises in Ukraine that Russian maneuvers effectively rendered NATO inert and unable to respond to developments on the ground.

Field Research Observations

Experts in the Baltic States confirmed the results of research and the CAE. Russian media currently outcompetes Baltic-based media in terms of both quality and quantity, and Russian media presents narratives that deride the West with arguments and claims of highly dubious accuracy or outright falsehoods. Respondents also stated that the broadcasting of certain "mini movies" or documentaries (approximately twelve- to twenty-minute news stories) on Russian media was coordinated and compelled by the Russian state. In Estonia, experts noted that in 2007, during the Bronze Soldier incident, Russian news crews would begin setting up to film a shot away from everyone else and outside any activity worth covering, only for protesters to arrive minutes later perfectly in the camera's frame. For instance, one expert in Narva noted that during the incident he heard reports on the radio that there were large protests in the center of Narva, but when he walked the few short blocks from his office to the location of the reported protests, he found no one. Approximately twenty minutes later, vans with protesters arrived and began demonstrating in the street. To know where the Russians are going to act next, one must follow the cameras and reporters.

Respondents noted that regulating Russian media presented difficulties because the companies were based in either Sweden or England and outside the necessary jurisdictions. Assuming actions are taken against a Russian channel or station, such as when Lithuania suspended RTR Planeta, people can still access it illegally or online. In a similar vein, some Russian TV channels and particularly radio stations broadcast from inside Russia into the Baltic States. One can receive Russian radio clearly until about the halfway point along on the western route from Narva to Tallinn.

When speaking with members of local communities in the region, younger and middle-aged respondents stated they did not trust Russian TV, but neither did they trust channels like CNN or BBC. They reasoned that those channels were owned by the U.S. and British governments and were therefore equally untrustworthy. To find trustworthy news and information, these respondents stated they searched the Internet for unbiased information. They did not state which sites they used regularly. Estonia and Latvia are set to begin broadcasting a Russian-language channel in the summer and fall of 2015, respectively. Many expressed skepticism at these efforts based on insufficient funding to produce programming that can compete with Russian media and on the editorial line emanating from Tallinn and Riga as being untrusted by Russian speakers. Respondents also pointed out, however, that those channels would be capable of defining what it means to be a Russian speaker in the Baltic States, an act that Russian media cannot fulfill.

Regarding the information environment, the Baltic States share much with Crimea; it is perhaps only slightly less saturated with Russian media that presents a biased portrayal of local and world events. Indeed, most respondents identified the information environment as the weakest point for each Baltic State. In this regard, concerns of Russian hybrid warfare may be warranted. However, information operations standing alone may either represent the very early stages of any potential hybrid warfare operation or may represent the extent of Russian operations in the region if they prove effective at causing instability. Either way, whether short or long term, Russian media present a threat not only by spreading inaccurate information and the resulting biased viewpoints but also by calling into question the trustworthiness of all media. Efforts in Estonia to build psychological defense focus on community opinion leaders, such as teachers, to demonstrate how to assess media appear to be in the right direction, but only time will tell how effective those efforts and providing Baltic Russian-language alternative programming will prove.

Notes

1. Mike Winnerstig, ed., *Tools of Destabilization: Russia, Soft Power and Non-military Influence in the Baltic States*, FOI, FOI-R--3990--SE, December, 2014, 52.
2. Ibid., 53.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 54.
5. Ibid., 54-55.
6. Ibid., 87.
7. Gatis Pelnens, ed., *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States* (Riga: Center for East European Policy Studies, 2010), 183-184.
8. Ibid., 189.
9. Ibid., 188.
10. Winnerstig, ed., *Tools of Destabilization*, 130.
11. Ibid., 131.
12. Ibid., 133.
13. Ibid.
14. See generally Audrone Nugairate, "Lithuania – Media Landscape," *European Journalism Centre*, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/lithuania; Urmas Loit, "Estonia – Media Landscape," *European Journalism Centre*, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/estonia; Vita Zelce, Klinta, Locmele, and Olga Procevska, "Latvia – Media Landscape," *European Journalism Centre*, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/latvia.
15. Ibid.
16. Loit, "Estonia," 6-7.
17. Nugaraite, "Lithuania," 9.
18. Loit, "Estonia," 7.
19. Items reviewed for this analysis of narratives in Russian-language news media included Internet news sources (Politkom.ru, Gazeta.ru, Rubaltic.ru), newspapers (*Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*), television news broadcasts (Channel One, Rossiya TV, NTV/NTV Mir, and First Baltic Channel), and documentary features between 2004 and 2015. Although the majority of material consulted for this analysis was domestic to Russia, many sources are rebroadcast in the Baltic States and therefore indicative of the information narratives propagated by Russia in the region. Original Russian language material was translated by a US government entity.
20. Maksim Reva, *The Hidden Story of the Baltic States*, Documentary, 2013, http://youtu.be/o9W9tMZPQRw.

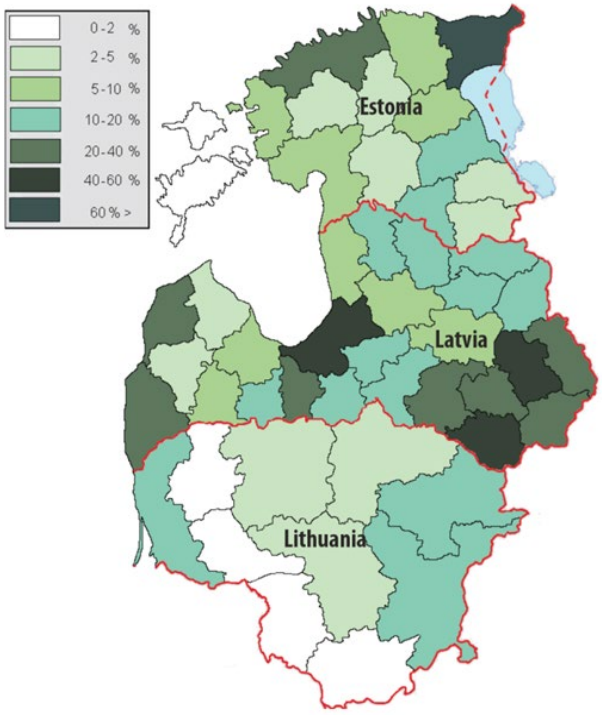
Society and Politics

Russia identifies soft power in its Foreign Policy Concept as an integral tool "for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy."[1] In its survey of Russian Federation foreign policy, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs elaborates a concept it calls the humanitarian dimension of Russian foreign policy, to include the defense of human rights, the protection of the interests of compatriots living abroad, consular matters, and partnerships in the cultural and scientific sectors.[2] These areas of activity match sub-paragraphs under the Foreign Policy Concept section, titled "International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights," that list Russia's objectives, including countering manifestations of neo-Nazism and attempts to rewrite history and revise the outcomes of World War II, and establishing Russia's positive image worth of the high status of its culture. Some of these objectives and pronouncements constitute legitimate prerogatives and goals of Russia as a state. However, the implementation of some of the goals of this humanitarian dimension in the Baltic States more closely resembles a strategy Russia condemns in its Foreign Policy Concept as "destructive and unlawful use of soft power and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, [and] manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad."[3] In particular, Russia uses the compatriot populations inside these countries as justification for interfering in domestic social and political life in the Baltic States. Specifically, Russia has been using non-governmental organizations to stir tensions surrounding language, citizenship, and history. The use of compatriot populations in Russia's near abroad does not represent a new tactic; Sergei Karaganov suggested leveraging compatriots for foreign policy purposes in 1992. The prominence of Russian compatriot populations in the 2008 invasion of Georgia and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, as well as General Valery Gerasimov's article highlighting the need to harness the protest potential of local populations, appear to have recast the international and national security institutions' spotlights on this tactic.

This section will examine how Russia employs its compatriot policy in each Baltic State to foment tension around the issues of language, citizenship, history, and what it deems the rise of neo-Nazism. It will also consider the influence Russia exerts in the political life in each Baltic State as an additional social lever of influence.

Before proceeding to those considerations, it bears noting that Russia's soft power efforts reach beyond its compatriot policy and include a number of benign programs. Not all manifestations of Russian soft power constitute inappropriate interference in Baltic societies. Indeed, cooperative exchanges of culture, education, science, and the arts bring many benefits to Baltic societies. Russia maintains cultural and eductional exchange programs with all three Baltic States, to varying degrees, focused on exhibiting Russian culture in those states and exposing students to Russia through its universities. These represent traditional methods of public diplomacy that fit well into Joseph Nye's concept of soft power, where a state offers its socio-cultural products and views with the aim of attracting others to share in them and adopt those views.[4] Russia also sponsors art exhibitions, formal educational exchanges for the arts and the sciences, educational programs on historic and folk traditions, Russian-language learning programs, as well as pop culture.

While most of these programs lead to mutual benefit between Russia and the Baltic States without incident, other components are more divisive. For instance, grants for studying at universities in Russia are stated to be open to anyone graduating from a high school in a Baltic State, but the number of grants awarded to ethnic Russians far outruns the number awarded to non-Russians, and the process for determining recipients has lost transparency after being coopted by the Russian embassies in the region. However, this study focuses on how Russia exerts influence in the Baltic States to shape an environment toward being conducive to the operations similar to those it conducted in Crimea in 2014. Accordingly, this section will now turn to considering how Russia implements its compatriot policy to establish



See Note 5.

Figure 7. Percentage of Russians in the Baltic States by County

a base of sympathizers in the Baltic States and stimulate tensions in Baltic societies. This requires first understanding how Russia defines the term "compatriot."

The Law on State Policy on Compatriots Abroad, as amended in 2013, defines four categories of compatriots: (1) persons born in a state, who live in it and are characterized by a common language, history, cultural heritage, tradition and custom, and their direct relatives; (2) citizens of the Russian Federation living permanently abroad; (3) those born in the Soviet Union who now live in states that used to be part of the Soviet Union, and who have obtained citizenship in their country of residence, as well as those without any citizenship; and (4) emigrants from the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union who have obtained citizenship in their country of residence, as well as those without any citizenship.[6] Official policy found in the State Programme to Work with Compatriots Living Abroad and the State Programme for Foreign Policy makes clear that Russian soft power and its compatriot policy are closely linked. After Russia justified its interventions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 on protecting compatriots abroad, it is now well-known that each Baltic State is home to Russian compatriots.

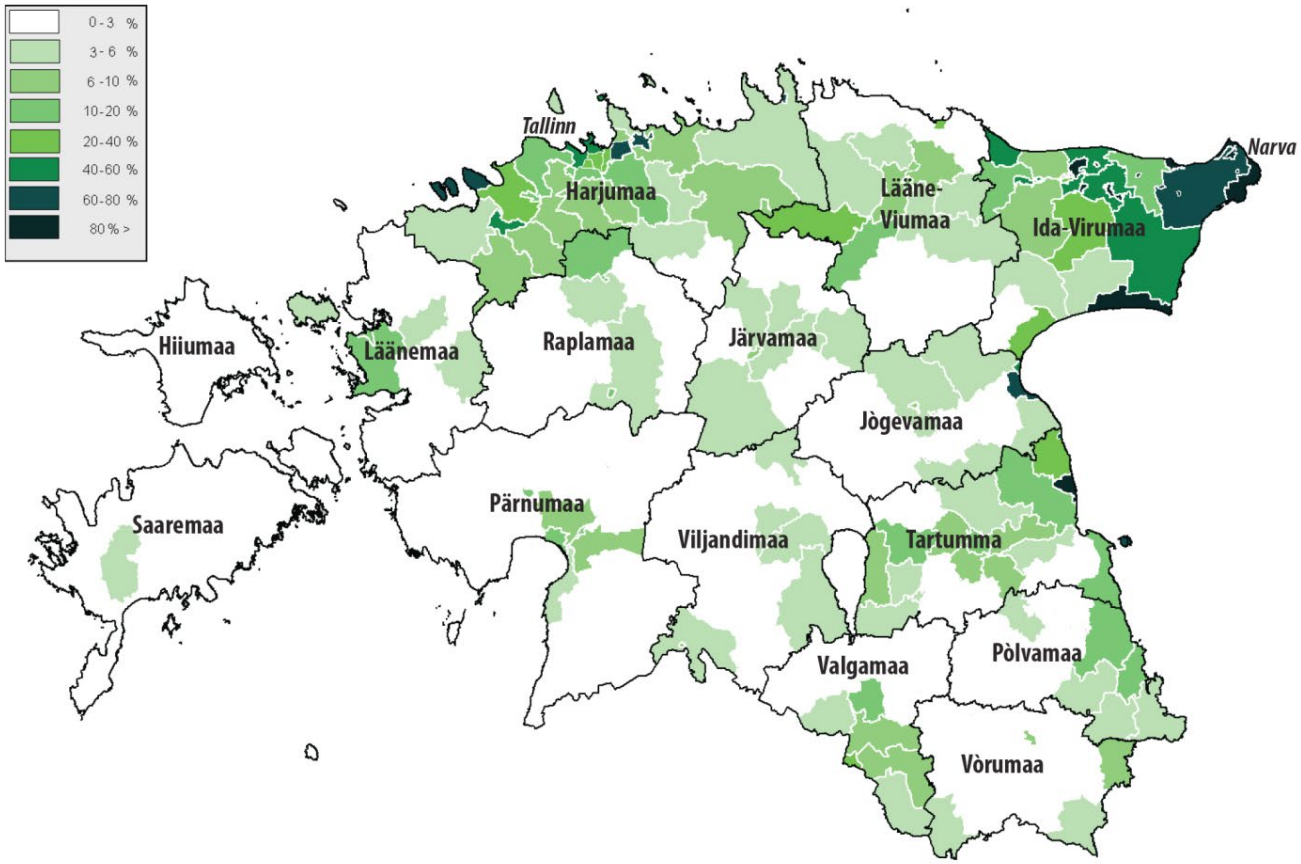
Approximately thirty percent of Estonia's population is made of Russian compatriots split largely between the capital, Tallinn, and the Ida-Viru county in the northeast, most notably in the city of Narva.[7] In Latvia, approximately thirty-four percent of the population can be classified as Russian compatriots, concentrated in the capital, Riga, and the eastern region of Latgale, whose major cities are Rezekne and Daugavpils.[8] Finally, of Lithuania's population, only approximately eight percent qualify as Russian compatriots, but commentators have identified the equally-sized Polish minority as sympathetic and in some ways actively supportive of Russian views and policies.[9] Accordingly, the Baltic States would seem to present fertile grounds for Russian influence through compatriot policies. Russia accomplishes its compatriot policy in the Baltic States chiefly through NGOs and media to instill messages: the Baltic States support Nazism as evidenced by their revisionist history, Russian-speaking people suffer discrimination, and the Baltic States' represent failed democracies and lesser members of the EU and NATO. Russia also uses NGOs and the media to sow discord through advocating an interpretation of the region's history that does not accord with the Baltic States' own interpretations. As this report includes a separate section on Russia's use of the media, this section will focus on the use of NGOs and, to a lesser extent, the Orthodox Church.

Russian compatriot policy in the Baltic States runs from the top down. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs houses the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Cultural Cooperation, abbreviated in Russian as *Rossotrudnichevsto*. This agency works closely with the Government Commission on Compatriots Living Abroad, the Russkiy Mir fund, the Public Diplomacy Support Fund, and the Fund for the Legal Protection and Support of Russian Federation Compatriots Living Abroad to coordinate and finance NGOs abroad whose missions include raising awareness about the plight of Russian compatriots living in the Baltic States and advocating the Russian version of history.[10]

Compatriot Policy and Politics in Estonia

In Estonia, a Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots guides Russian NGOs from the Russian embassy. Prominent among those NGOs is the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (LICHR). Its 2014 conference in Tallinn, entitled "Human Rights in Contemporary Estonia: The Practical Experience of LICHR," featured reports and presentations that broadcasted the views of the Russian Federation on linguistic discrimination in Estonia.[11] Another prominent NGO is Mir Bez Natsizma (MBN, World Without Nazism), whose stated mission focuses on defending human rights. Estonian security services, however, report that the organization in fact spreads accusations that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania espouse and promote Nazism.[12] This group's efforts reach outside the Baltic States and into international institutions like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the UN, and the Council of Europe. For instance, at an OSCE conference in September 2013, MBN installed for its auxiliary event "Mass statelessness in Estonia and Latvia as a result of ethnic discrimination."[13] As the Estonian Internal Security Service notes, that action and efforts like it seek "to disturb the integrity of the target country's society, to deepen and amplify existing ethnic, social, economic, regional and other differences, and also to artificially create and instigate such distinctions."[14] The degree of Russia's success in this respect might be measured by political trends and attitudes of the Estonian population.

The Centre Party in Estonia plays the role of the pro-Russian political party. A clear majority of Russian-speaking Estonians identify with and support the Estonian Centre Party, headed by Edgar Savisaar, the Mayor of Tallinn. Support for Centre Party has been as high as eighty percent in recent years but decreased to seventy percent in early 2015 polling.[15] Savisaar's close



See Note 16.

Figure 8. Percentage of Ethnic Russians in Estonia

affiliation with the United Russia Party was exposed in a December 2010 scandal, when Estonia's Internal Security Service, KAPO, caught Savisaar attempting to accept 1.5 million euros that Russian Railways President Vladimir Yakunin offered to support the Centre Party in parliamentary elections.[17] Although the corruption scandal damaged Savisaar's public reputation, he retained Centre Party control. In the March 2015 parliamentary election, the Centre Party gained one seat but failed to become part of the coalition government formed by the highest vote getter, the Reform Party led by Taavi Roivas. While the Centre Party gained only one seat in parliament from the 2011 elections, all three parties in the coalition government lost seats: the Reform party lost three seats, the Social Democrat party lost four seats, and the Pro Patria and Res Publica party lost nine seats.[18] Two newcomer parties, Free and Conservative Peoples, claimed fifteen of those sixteen lost seats, so continuing gains by the Centre Party may not indicate significant success of Russian influence. Eurobarometer reported in 2014 that while fifty-two percent of Estonians trust the EU and thirty-nine percent trust the Estonian parliament, the Riigikogu, only thirteen percent of Estonians trust their political parties.[19]

In a study of the integration of the Russian compatriot population, an Estonian social scientist identified five categories of integration based on language capability and use, citizenship identity, and participation: (1) successfully integrated, comprising twenty-one percent; (2) Russian-speaking Estonian patriots, comprising sixteen percent; (3) critically-minded Estonian speakers, comprising thirteen percent; (4) little integration, comprising twenty-eight percent; and (5) no integration, comprising twenty-two percent.[20] Russia targets the younger generations with camp programs that instill pro-Russian values and interpretations of history. One such group is Molodoye Slovo, which is modeled after the Russian youth movement Nashi and "has been engaged in fighting against the so-called fabrication of history."[21]

The Orthodox Church in Estonia belongs to the Moscow Patriarchate, but only forty-seven percent of Russians in Estonia feel an affiliation.[22] Approximately nineteen percent of Estonians and fifty percent of non-Estonian-speaking populations are affiliated with a particular church.[23] Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church receives financial support from Russia. Of the 1.24 million euros donated to build a new church in Tallinn, the Estonian Security Service believes 826,000 euros of it came at the direction of Vladimir Yakunin, head of the Russian Railways and member of the board of trustees of Russkiy Mir.[24]

Compatriot Policy and Politics in Latvia

Russia's compatriot policy in Latvia closely resembles that in Estonia: a centralized network of NGOs that push anti-Baltic and pro-Russian ideas and messages with significant financial assistance from the Kremlin. The Russian Embassy established the Compatriots' Organizations Coordination Council in 2007 to allocate and facilitate financial support from Russia.[25] Major actors in that network include Aleksandr Gaponenko, the Non-Citizen's Congress, and World Without Nazism. Mr. Gaponenko represents a trend across all three Baltic States in which alleged experts publish works on controversial issues, such as Baltic and Soviet history and human rights.[26] These documents present arguments that support Russia's positions on these issues and stir controversy in Baltic communities. One such argument is that the Soviet Union did not occupy the Baltic States but liberated them; another is that the requirement for sixty percent of instruction in Russian schools to be in the national language constitutes a severe violation of human rights. Russian institutions and news agencies often use Mr. Gaponenko's writings, thereby constructing a self-supporting and referential loop of pro-Russian arguments and anti-Latvian criticism.[27] Some of these organizations, like the Non-Citizen's Congress, operate as non-registered organizations, allowing them to avoid limitations imposed by law for social organizations, including transparency in financial support.[28] The Non-Citizen's Congress also provides an example of how groups that espouse Russian narratives against the Baltic States reach out to international organizations to gain traction and legitimacy. This group has approached the UN General Secretariat and the President of the Council of the EU, organized events covering non-citizenship issues next to the European parliament building, and visited several foreign embassies in Latvia.[29]

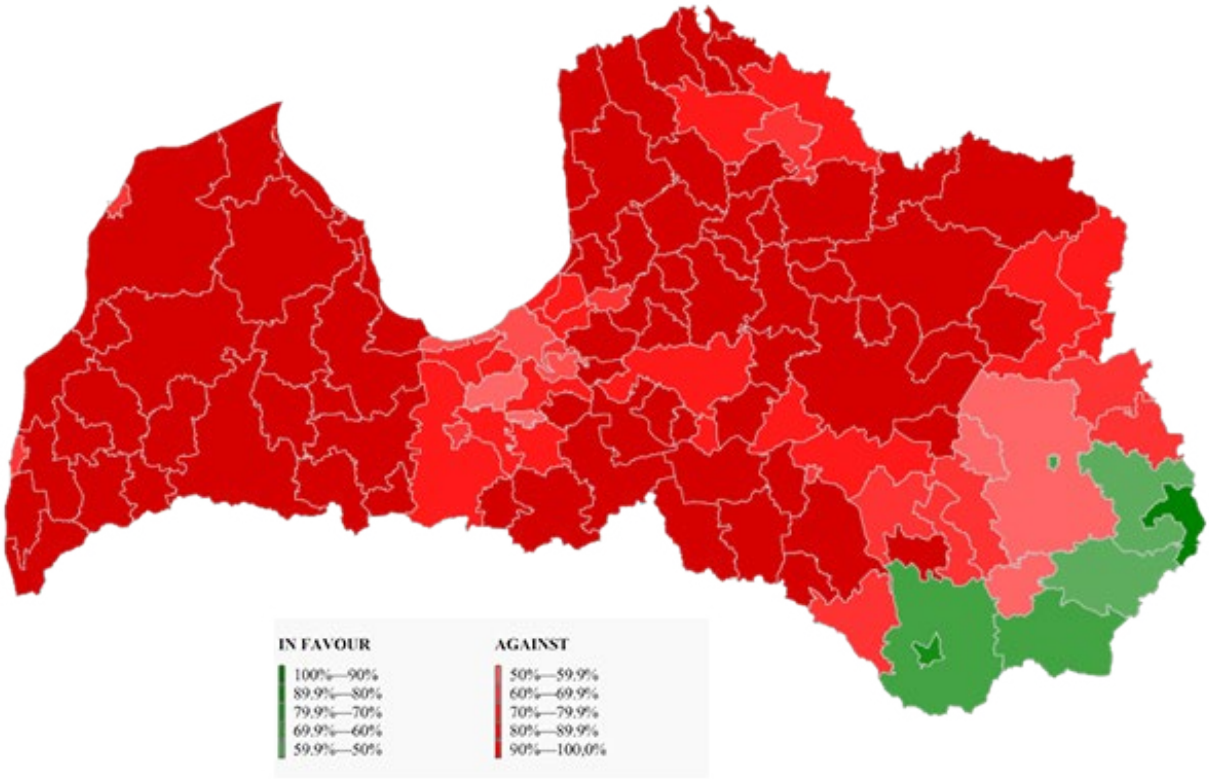


Figure 9. Results of the 2012 National Referendum on Making Russian the Second Official Language in Latvia by County

The Orthodox Church is the third largest in Latvia, with approximately 370,000 members, behind the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches.[30] The Orthodox Church appears to play a role at high levels of diplomacy, exemplified by the reception of Patriarch Alexy II by the President of Latvia and the inclusion of Metropolitan Alexander, head of the Latvian Orthodox Church, in the Latvian Presidential delegation to Russia.[31] While Orthodox Christianity remains the third-largest religious affiliation, its adherents would seem to be devout, as the Latvian Orthodox Church claimed over 20,000 people came to see the Tihvin icon at the Christ Born Orthodox Cathedral in Riga. Tensions between the Latvian government and the Orthodox Church are exemplified by the Latvian parliament's refusal on several occasions to recognize Orthodox Christmas as a national holiday. The Orthodox Church and its advocates believe that Russia generally deserves greater recognition for its place in Latvian history and culture.

The political influence of Russia on Latvia is felt through the Harmony Center Party, commonly known as Harmony. Formed in 2005, this center-left national party merged with the Social Democratic Party and the New Centre Party in 2010. It has always been pro-Russian, more recently evidenced by its controversial formal cooperation agreement with the Russian ruling party, United Russia.[32] Also controversial have been the leadership's contacts with Russian officials, including Modest Kolerov, who heads the Directorate for Interregional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries, the mission of which is to prevent color revolutions in neighboring countries and renew Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space.[33] It is alleged that Russia transferred one million U.S. dollars to Harmony through compatriot organizations in 2006 in an effort to influence elections.[34] Further controversy stems from an investigation by the Latvian Corruption Prevention Bureau into the funding for propaganda training provided to Harmony leaders in Daugavpils by expert consultants

connected with United Russia.[35] Despite these and other controversies, Harmony has remained the most popular political party among Russian compatriot voters, and ethnic Latvians vote for Harmony as well. In its first election, Harmony garnered seventeen seats in parliament. In the 2010 elections, Harmony won twenty-nine seats in parliament and two more in the early 2011 elections. Despite winning twenty-four seats in parliament in 2014 and being the top overall vote-getter, Harmony does not form part of the coalition government, although it does control the municipal government of Riga.[36] Since 2009, Mayor Nils Usakovs has pursued closer ties with the city of Moscow, including official exchange visits between Riga and Moscow, Riga's hosting of a Russian Compatriots Conference, and signing a program of cooperation. The Riga city government possesses the autonomy to pursue relationships with other cities that would benefit Riga economically. However, that Riga municipality is home to nearly half of Latvia's residents, that Moscow city officials have made clear that good relations would be maintained only with pro-Russian politicians in Riga, and that a Mayor of Moscow showed his support for Russian language activists while visiting Riga all indicate this relationship is both potentially powerful and beyond economic cooperation.[37] Indeed, based on the experience of Harmony in Riga, its close relationship with Russia is not marked by transparency nor appropriate neutrality on Latvian domestic issues.

Compatriot Policy and Politics in Lithuania

In Lithuania, Russia's compatriot policy is also coordinated by a Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots and funded by the Foundation to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad under Rossotrudnichestvo, the autonomous Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[38] The Lithuanian State Security Department highlights two centers focused on compatriot issues: the Independent Human Rights Center and the Center for Research and Protection of Fundamental Rights. These organizations produce materials and hold events accusing Lithuania of violating minorities' rights, dismantling the Russian-language school system, allowing the rebirth of Nazism, and falsifying history, among others.[39] For instance, the Independent Human Rights Center held a rally at the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry to protest Lithuania's support of Ukraine. Lithuanian youth in Russian-language schools are the target of Russian influence through courses, leadership training, and camps, some of which are paramilitary in nature.[40] Russia encourages students who graduate from the Russian-language school system in all three Baltic States to attend universities in Russia under grants that cover all costs.[41]

An important consideration regarding Russian social and political influence in Lithuania is the Polish minority. There are approximately 177,000 Russians in Lithuania but approximately 200,000 Poles.[42] Russian and Polish minorities reside in concentrations in Vilnius, Vilnius county, Klaipeda, and Visaginas, although the Russians in Visaginas tend to vote for Lithuanian parties.[43] The Russian minority is politically fragmented, while there is only one political party declared to represent the Polish minority, the Electoral Action of Poles (EAP), led by Voldemar Tomashevski. In recent elections, some Russian speakers' political parties have joined mainstream Lithuanian parties, while the Russian Alliance party has allied with the EAP.[44] The EAP has also cooperated with the Lithuanian People's Party, which recently branded itself a pro-Russian party when its leaders declared an alliance with Russia during its founding congress.[45] Following the examples of the Centre Party in Estonia and the Harmony Centre Party in Latvia, the Lithuanian People's Party also signed an official cooperation agreement with the United Russia Party.[46] In the 2012 parliamentary elections, the EAP received 5.83 percent of the vote, earning eight seats in parliament and a role as a coalition partner.[47]

The Polish minority and its growing political success cause concern for some in Lithuania because its community leaders engage in actions and rhetoric that are often in line with Russian foreign policy interests, including claims that the state represses minorities and rewrites history. For instance, Mr. Tomashevski's stance against adopting the euro in 2015 was officially presented to the Lithuanian government's Coalition Council. The fragmented nature of Lithuania's Russian-language political

parties contrasts with the consolidated nature of Polish minority politics and its alignment with the narratives of Russian compatriot policy, which could indicate a strong connection between Russia and the Polish minority in Lithuania. This would support Aleksandr Dugin's statement that "[e]thnic tensions between Lithuanians and Poles are an especially valuable asset and should be used or, whenever possible, these tensions should be deepened."[48] A visit closely preceding the 2012 parliamentary elections by representatives of the EAP to the Presidential Directorate for Interregional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries, whose mission is to foment ethnic tensions in the Baltic States, also supports that there is a strong connection between the Polish minority in Lithuania and Russia.[49] However, support for Russian policy may decline as knowledge of the Russian language becomes less popular than knowledge of English, a trend shown by the 2011 census, which revealed that more people aged twenty-five and younger know English than know Russian.[50]

Citizenship

Some of the allegations made and information spread by these NGOs lack any grounding in truth, such as a dangerous and significant rise of extremism in the form of neo-fascism or neo-Nazism. Some of these claims have limited bases in truth. However, the allegations those bases support represent gross distortions or misrepresentations of reality. For instance, in the early 1990s, Estonia and Latvia denied citizenship to residents whose families arrived during the Soviet Union era and granted citizenship only to those residents whose families had lived in those countries during the inter-war period. Lithuania took the opposite approach, and granted citizenship to all residents at the time of independence in 1991.[51] The requirements for citizenship in Estonia and Latvia have relaxed since the early 1990s, for instance by automatically granting citizenship to the children of non-citizens born there, but other immigrants still must pass language and citizenship exams.[52] Importantly, while non-citizenship denies the right to vote in national elections, all other benefits of living in those countries and in the EU are available to non-citizen residents, including the ability to travel visa-free within the Schengen zone using a non-citizen resident passport. Both Estonia and Latvia have established multiple integration programs aimed at providing resources to assist non-citizens with gaining citizenship, including language courses. Estonia has been more successful than Latvia in reducing the percentage of non-citizens in the non-ethnic Estonian population, dropping it from thirty to six percent.[53]

Language Rights

An additional example of the distortion and misrepresentation of reality is how these NGOs use language and education policies to support their allegations of discrimination. In all three Baltic States, all official documents and signs must be in the national language, often leaving those who do not speak the national language in need of assistance. All three Baltic States also continue to have dual school systems: the public school system that instructs in the home-state language and the private Russian school system.[54] The public school systems are free and provide preparation for attendance at a public university, all of which require sufficient knowledge of the national language. In recent years, Estonia and Latvia introduced legislation requiring sixty percent of instruction in Russian language secondary schools to be in Estonian and Latvian, respectively. This requirement has been criticized as a major human rights violation by Russian-sponsored NGOs.[55]

A significant challenge to the Baltic States is that Russia provides funding to multiple NGOs to publish numerous reports documenting alleged human rights violations, while the number of reports by independent bodies on these issues remain few. The most notable and most recent report by an objective, independent organization was by the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance from 2007.[56] That report criticized Estonia and Latvia for shortcomings in their treatment of national minorities, but it also noted that integration programs in both countries had foreseen those shortcomings and were designed to remedy them. The imbalance in reporting could skew the perceptions of officials and the public. An approach to countering this form of Russian influence could be producing official, objective, and independent reports on the situation of national minorities in the Baltic States.

A Lack of Separatist Sentiment

Russia clearly views these minorities as a leverage point in Baltic societies as it fuels the tensions that contribute to their perceived discrimination. However, the national security services of Estonia and Lithuania noted in their annual reports that those countries do not possess the kinds of separatist-minded enclaves that journalists searched for after the annexation of Crimea. Indeed, the Baltic States stand in a different position than Ukraine and its Crimean peninsula, not least because those states experienced a different trajectory than Ukraine since 1991. The fact that the Baltic States have been members of the EU and NATO for ten years mediates against pro-Russian sympathies strong enough to translate into actions against Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania. This is in part because ethnic Russians have experienced higher standards of living that contrast with the decline of neighboring Russian cities, such as Ivangorod. Additionally, the geography in which these populations reside does not hold similar historical, cultural, or spiritual significance as Crimea holds for Russia. Notably lacking from Russia's narratives regarding the Baltic States and the compatriots living there are claims of ancient historical rights and bonds. Crimea possessed not only deep historical, cultural, and spiritual importance for Russia, but polling prior to the annexation showed a clear majority of the population in favor of secession. However, polling in eastern Ukraine showed less than fifty percent favored secession, and Russia demonstrated it requires only a small segment of a population to instigate an insurgency. Accordingly, while the Baltic States do not possess many of the conditions that made Crimea an opportune target for hybrid warfare, Russia has demonstrated that it needs only a small foothold of support to instigate internal disturbances in a neighboring state. From the social and political perspective, Russia's influence appears to be intensifying, but the efficacy of those efforts remains murky as pro-Russian NGOs and political parties gain an audience while national security services report an absence of extremists willing to secede.

Field Research Observations

Insofar as the annexation of Crimea focused attention on the presence of Russian minority populations in the Baltic States, the field research associated with this study sought to test that quickly drawn parallel. SMEs made clear that while each of the Baltic States faces ethnopolitical tensions, it would be inaccurate to draw

Collaborative Analysis Event Insight:

When discussing the allegations of a potential fifth column of Russian-speaking minorities, the group highlighted that this issue revolves around cultural more than ethnic identity, and the potential for a fifth column more likely resides in cultural identification than in concrete political or economic grievances. While the Russian Federation engages in efforts to influence Russian-speaking minorities through organizations like Russkiy Mir, there is little evidence that those populations present an imminent threat of mobilization. Instead, many shared anecdotal evidence that those populations are increasingly integrated into Baltic societies, and there is no wish to leave the EU and West to join Russia. It was acknowledged that this constituted an area needing more comprehensive research. However, the group noted that Russia could use the presence of these groups as pretext for Russian intervention, particularly in the event of national disorder or crisis, whether organic or manufactured. The current utility of these populations for Russia, however, remains as a topic of propaganda to apply pressure to the Baltic States and influence Western audiences.

a parallel between Russian compatriots in Crimea and Russian compatriots in the Baltic States.

SMEs in Estonia noted that the Russian compatriot population generally supports Russia geopolitically in regard to Crimea's annexation, but this sympathy does not translate into support for similar actions in Estonia. Part of the explanation for this resides in the split between the emotional and rational sides of the Russian compatriot psyche. Russians in Estonia feel a cultural, emotional, and spiritual connection with Russia, but from a distance, as respondents noted. When experts have asked the compatriot population whether similar operations were possible in Estonia, the answer was no. Similarly, these experts report that the majority in the compatriot population would not be happy to migrate to Russia and would prefer to remain in Estonia. Several respondents highlighted that Russian agents visited Estonia and tried to launch "street actions" and protests, but only approximately twenty people participated from the local population. These twenty people represent what many interviewees referred to as the very small minority that would actively support Russian hybrid warfare as seen in Crimea. Respondents did not deny that Russian compatriots perceive discrimination and experience some level of political and economic marginalization and that more can be done to continue and improve integration processes. Perceived discrimination and marginalization can be leveraged by Russia in a hybrid campaign, but the greatest countervailing force against current efforts to stoke those perceptions appears to be the experience of living in the EU for the past decade.

According to respondents, living in the EU has changed the former Soviet population's mindset. They no longer view the world in the same way as Russians living in Russia, and they are receptive to the counter-arguments to Russia's perspectives. Additionally, living in the EU has exposed these populations to higher living standards that they are now unwilling to relinquish or compromise for the sake of ideological values they do not strongly espouse. Many formal interviewees observed that Russian minorities in the eastern parts of the Baltic States were less supportive of the idea of Russian assistance than minorities in the capitals Tallinn and Riga in the western parts of Estonia and Latvia..

They attribute this to the fact that eastern populations view and hear about conditions in Russia more easily and regularly than those in the west, and know that while the Baltic States may not be as wealthy as other EU member states, conditions are still much better than in the neighboring oblasts of Russia. Residents of Narva, for instance, can see the poor conditions in Ivangorod across the Narva River. In speaking with residents, the pension in Narva is approximately 370 euros per month, whereas in Ivangorod it is 100 euros per month. The connection between Russian compatriots in Ukraine and those in Estonia appears to be limited to sympathy for a cultural, historical, and spiritual homeland and does not extend to reliable support for armed intervention toward secession and annexation.

Experts in Latvia similarly emphasized that it is unwise to transpose the image and ideas of Ukrainian Russian compatriots onto Latvian Russian compatriots. Respondents provided similar reasoning, including the higher standard of living and that time spent living in the EU had facilitated a change in mindset. Like the interviewees in Estonia, Latvian experts also noted that while Russian minorities emotionally desire to believe in Rus-

sia as a benevolent actor, they face difficulty when asked to rationally explain Russia's actions and positions. Respondents confirmed that the Russian compatriot population is not well-represented politically and suffers from some economic marginalization. Of note was also the history of resistance in the eastern region of Latgale, which manifests itself through high participation rates in the national guard and the country's highest number of applications for the military. Interviewees highlighted that the region, which was the only one to have majority votes against joining the EU and in favor of making Russian the second official language, has a very active national guard unit and featured prominently in the resistance movement known as the Forest Brothers during the Soviet occupation. One expert summarized the others well in stating that Russian compatriots in Latvia want to improve ethnopolitics in the country, not to make Latgale part of Russia. Failed attempts by Russian agents to start unrest and protests in Latvia in recent months support that conclusion.

When speaking with experts in Lithuania, the conversations about minority communities sympathetic to Russia that could be mobilized turned quickly to discussions about the Polish minority in the Vilnius region. Respondents noted a large divide between the Polish and Lithuanian communities, as well as a need to do more toward integration. The Vilnius region lacks resources and is economically disadvantaged, while the Polish minority concentrated there remains socially and politically vulnerable despite asserting its own identity through language, symbols such as flags, and a strong connection with the Catholic Church. Similar to the Russian compatriot communities in Estonia and Latvia, the Polish minority in Lithuania supports Russia's actions in Ukraine, which contradicts the official position of the Polish government. Respondents noted that this minority consumed Russian media, and its leader recently wore the St. George's ribbon during public appearances, ostensibly in support of Russia's actions in Ukraine or of the separatist groups. The Polish Party was referred to as having a post-Soviet mentality and being seen as disloyal to the Lithuanian state. In a demonstration of Russia's combination of history with political activism, Polish activists that used to wave pro-Russian symbols at protests now use historical symbols from their regions, such as Samogitia in the northwest and Suvalkija in the south. In contrast with interviewees in Estonia and Latvia, who recognized that their countries faced ethnopolitical tensions but also confidently assessed that mobilization was unlikely, respondents in Lithuania were more equivocal and acknowledged that the mood and direction of the Polish minority were difficult to assess. Accordingly, while the attitudes and behaviors of the compatriot populations in the Baltic States continue to present opportunities for further research, the attitudes of the Polish minority in Lithuania seems to present the greatest knowledge gap.

SMEs in each Baltic State observed that the Russian compatriot populations residing there should not be viewed as the same as the compatriot populations in Ukraine. An important corollary to that assessment lies in how these populations view these territories; the Baltic States are not the Crimean peninsula. After a respondent early in the field research emphasized that Russians and Russian compatriots do not view the Baltic States as part of Russia but do view Crimea as part of Russia, later interviewees were asked whether the Russian compatriot population in their state viewed that country as part of Russia. Overwhelmingly, the response was no; those populations do not view those territories as Russian. This places the Baltic States in a fundamentally different position from Crimea in the eyes, minds, and hearts of the compatriot populations residing there. Therefore, arguments to secede and join Russia based on historical, cultural, and spiritual legacies would be unlikely to gain traction with the compatriot communities. Further, although current conditions in the Baltic States for Russian compatriot populations may not be ideal, because conditions for Russian compatriots in the Baltics demonstrably outcompete conditions inside Russia, economic arguments are equally problematic for the Russians.

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Military

Military Dynamics of the Baltic Region

Although a discussion of conventional and nuclear military issues may appear unrelated to a study of Russia's hybrid or new-generation warfare, especially in the aftermath of the Crimean operation, it represents a traditional might that underpins the non-military, intelligence, and special operations tactics detailed in the so-called "Gerasimov Doctrine." After all, the "little green men" in Crimea were not alone. The Baltic Sea Fleet was also present in Ukraine, and tens of thousands of additional troops were massed just over the border. Similarly, Russia's use of proxies in eastern Ukraine should not overshadow the role its conventional military plays in the conflict. These separatists have been able to survive because they receive training, supplies, fire support, and likely reinforcements from the Russian military. The focus of this paper is the Baltic States, which present a much different situation. Russia's actions in Ukraine may have made the country an international pariah, but no nation or alliance has been willing to intervene militarily. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, though, are members of NATO, and its charter includes a collective defense provision. Actions Russia may take against these three states come with the potential for war with the West.

Russia's military actions of recent years remain largely consistent with its official state policy, the rhetoric of its national leaders, and the popular will of a great many in its citizenry. When viewed through this lens, Russia's 2008 war with Georgia, 2014 annexation of Crimea, and ongoing support for separatists in eastern Ukraine appear not as departures from the norm but as evidence of Russian leaders' steadfast resolve on the international scene, albeit a recently reacquired attribute. Accusations that Vladimir Putin is erratic or unstable seem to be unfounded or, at the very least, rooted in an unyieldingly biased perspective. Although his actions have been wholly inconsistent with the policies of Western governments and alliances, it is not that Putin has no regard for the rules; rather, he is abiding by the rules of an altogether different game, one that places Russia's stated national interests and those of his regime above all else. Russia is engaged in power politics, and the days of its toothless protest against Western expansion appear to be over. It is based upon this understanding that an examination of the region's military dynamics can be productive.

This analysis evaluates the defense policies and military capabilities of relevant players, as well as the pattern of escalating tensions on all sides. It concludes with an outlook on potential future scenarios. The cast of characters is varied. Although it is useful at times to speak of a Russia/NATO dichotomy, the reality is much more complex. Russia operates effectively as a dictatorship, one that can likely ensure Belarus's acquiescence, at least on the critical issue of air defense. NATO, on the other hand, is a twenty-eight-member, consensus-based union of liberal democracies across which threat perceptions, as well as combat power and readiness, differ dramatically. Lastly, militarily nonaligned Sweden and Finland are also actors in the Baltic Sea region.

Russia – Defense Policy

After Russia was unable to keep the newly independent Baltic States in its security orbit in the early 1990s, Moscow sought to transform these countries into a neutral buffer zone between itself and NATO.[1] This too failed, when in 2004 these nations joined the alliance. Over a decade later, Russian military thinking still centers on NATO. Despite the Alliance's focus on out-of-area operations and the downsizing of its member nations' militaries, Russian leaders believe NATO's continued existence and expansion serve chiefly to contain and oppose Russia. In his recent book *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*, James Sherr of Chatham House noted that Russia is "unreconciled to NATO's place in the world and has difficulty accepting that its more problematic undertakings (e.g., missile [defense], the Kosovo intervention and the Libya campaign) are not directed against itself."[2] Russia, according to Sherr, views NATO not just as a military alliance but also as a "military civilizational force and a pole of attraction" that insists its members "adopt its liberal-democratic framework."[3] The EU occupies a similar, though decidedly less ominous, place in Russian

military thinking. Although Russia does not formally consider the EU to be an adversary, Moscow views the organization as a purveyor of values contrary to its own and likely concludes, "[the] more the EU's norms and practices gain adherents and traction, the more incongruous Russia's model of governance appears."[4]

Two key documents provide the policy framework for Russia's military activities: the National Security Strategy to 2020 and the 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. In the former, Russia defined national security very broadly and listed nine relevant focus areas, including themes outside of the military realm, such as economics and values.[5] The 2014 Military Doctrine, like its 2010-predecessor, differentiated between military dangers[6] and military threats.[7,8] This delineation, according to Russia expert Roger McDermott, "permitted Moscow to continue to oppose NATO enlargement (rather than the Alliance as such) and out-of-area operations without designating it as a threat."[9] Among the military dangers listed is the "violation of international understandings by certain states and nonobservance of previously concluded international treaties in the area of arms prohibition, limitation, and reduction."[10] The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which limits military hardware and personnel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains, was signed before the Baltic States were independent nations. As such, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania never became signatories. All three nations committed to join a newer version of the agreement, the Adapted CFE Treaty, but ongoing disputes between NATO and Russia over the presence of Russian troops in Georgia and Moldova have prevented further action; the adapted CFE has not gone into effect. Despite this, and the fact that Russia suspended its own CFE observance in 2007, Moscow continues to cite the Baltic States' lack of inclusion in either treaty as a military danger. Russia claims these states constitute a legal "grey zone" that NATO could fortify without limitations.[11]

Russia – Military Capabilities

It is not the purpose of this study to assess the whole of Russian military capabilities, and the country's ambitious but troubled modernization efforts will not be addressed in great detail. Instead, this analysis concentrates on those assets Moscow can presently bring to bear. Russia can engage in belligerence in the region, in large part because of the strategic deterrent its formidable military provides. Figure 10 depicts Russia's current military districts (MDs). The Russian force that sits opposite the Baltic region is a command known as the western MD, depicted in blue. This already sizeable and capable force of twenty standing brigades is designed to draw reinforcements from the southern (brown) and central (green) MDs, as well the airborne forces, which are under the command of the General Staff.[12] A 2013 analysis by the Swedish Defense Research Agency noted that within a single week, the western MD could muster an additional five motorized rifle brigades and one airborne brigade.[13]

Ground forces are, of course, only part of the deterrent Russia possesses. The Baltic Fleet (with naval infantry) and the First Air Force and Air Defense Command supply combat capability in the sea and air, respectively. Of

See Note 14.

Figure 10. Military Districts of Russia as of December 1st 2010

particular importance are the air defense forces in each airfield group, which possess the advanced S-300 and S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. Russia is expected to release the even more sophisticated S-500 system later in 2015. Furthermore, Moscow designated Belarus to receive the S-400, which, combined with Russia's existing radar stations in that country, would work in concert as part of Russia's expansive integrated air defense system.[15] The range and effectiveness of these systems present a danger not only to "combat aircraft delivering munitions but also support aircraft such as JSTARS, AWACS and U-2, making target acquisition more difficult."[16] Such systems potentially give Russia the ability to enforce a no-fly zone over the region.[17] This would not only bolster the combat effectiveness of Russian ground forces and set conditions for their own air support but also would likely confound NATO troops that are accustomed to operating with complete air superiority.

Other standoff weapons, capable of striking targets from hundreds of kilometers away, provide an even more lethal deterrent, including tactical or theater-level nuclear weapons.[18] The "presence of nuclear capable Iskander ballistic missiles close to St Petersburg…puts the region under direct threat of conventional or nuclear ballistic missile attack."[19] Moreover, Russia recently announced it had reintroduced the Iskander to Kaliningrad.[20] Moscow has not confirmed whether tactical nuclear weapons are also present in the exclave, but that possibility exists.[21] Such weapons systems "could pose a threat to [NATO] movements and bases established in the area."[22] Russia also deployed nuclear-capable TU22M3 long-range strategic bombers to Crimea, well within range of the Baltic States.[23] Previous Soviet and Russian doctrine postulated the use of "nonstrategic nuclear weapons to deter intervention and deescalate conflict by air or with precision deep-strike systems." In other words, Russia had considered the use of tactical nuclear weapons first to shock its enemy and force a de-escalation in the conflict.[24] This tactic must be considered even though current Russian military doctrine no longer mentions this policy. Russia reportedly possesses a much greater number of tactical nuclear weapons than NATO. In addition, according to publicly available information, the NATO arsenal in Europe is limited to freefalling gravity bombs. In stark contrast, Russia maintains an assortment of delivery systems, including strategic and tactical aircraft, naval platforms, air defense systems, as well as tube and rocket artillery.[25] Nuclear ballistic missile submarines deployed from Artic bases are also a factor at the strategic level.[26]

There is also the issue of Sweden's Gotland Island. For much of the recent past, the island was completely demilitarized, a reflection of Stockholm's post-Cold War decision to dismantle its once-mighty military. Amidst recent tensions with Russia, however, "Sweden is re-establishing permanent air, naval and fast reaction forces on Gotland Island."[27] The island is approximately 155 miles from Kaliningrad and would be of supreme strategic importance in any military operation in the Baltic Sea area. If Russia were to seize the island as part of a move against the Baltic States, its forces would be able to emplace high-tech standoff weapons, including surface-to-air, surface-to-surface, and surface-to-ship missiles. Along with similar weapons systems in Kaliningrad and in the regions of Belarus and mainland Russia that border the Baltic States, Russia would be able to effectively range the entirety of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, virtually all of the Baltic Sea, and strategically critical portions of Scandinavia.[28]

Russia – Aggression Short of War

In the late 2000s, Russia began exhibiting a pattern of increasing assertiveness with the Baltic States—a pattern that has since grown into outright aggression but falls short of war. In 2007, Estonia relocated a Soviet World War II memorial statue from the center of the capital to a nearby graveyard. This sparked outrage in Russia, riots among ethnic Russians in Tallinn, and, ultimately, a two-phased cyber attack that emanated from Russia. The first phase of the attack was primitive and targeted the "Estonian Government Briefing Room, the Estonian Ministry of [Defense] and leading political parties in the country."[29] Phase two was a more sophisticated distributed denial of services (DDoS) attack on the "Estonian Parliament, two of the country's largest banks, almost all of the country's government ministries and three of six biggest news organizations."[30] This incident and others were reported to have been the work of the so-called Russian Business Network (RBN), a group not definitively linked to the Russian government.[31]

"[The] fact that the RBN is not a registered company and that its [Internet] domains are registered to anonymous addresses makes pinning down the origins and ownership of the RBN a challenge."[32]

Other forms of hostility are less ambiguous, such as large-scale, combined arms exercises.[33] In addition to the obvious training value, such exercises are indicative of Russia's doctrine and threat perception and serve as a messaging platform to regional governments and alliances. For example, the Western Military District conducts the Zapad (Russian for west) exercises in cooperation with Belarus. Zapad-2009 featured the suppression of a mock uprising among the Polish minority in Belarus and culminated in a simulated Russian nuclear strike on Warsaw.[34] The scenario for Zapad-2013 consisted of an attack on Belarus by "Baltic terrorists." Russian military expert Stephen Blank observed that the terrorists, despite their nominal status as a small, irregular force, were able to withstand direct attacks from the combined Russian-Belarusian force. Further underscoring the transparency of the scenario, Blank noted that the terrorists "conducted an amphibious landing on the Baltic Sea coast, employed Mi-24 helicopters, SU-25 and Su-30 strike aircraft, as well as conducted ship-to-shore fire from naval vessels of the Baltic Fleet."[35] Moreover, the scenario included an attack by Finnish forces on Russian positions on the Karelian Isthmus. Even though Finland remains militarily non-aligned, its government has considered NATO membership, as well as lesser forms of cooperation with the Alliance.[36] Hence, Zapad-2013 not only delivered a clear message to the Baltic States and their NATO brethren but also served as a stern reminder to Finland. After all, it was Helsinki's quiet submission to Soviet will that underpinned Finland's formal sovereignty during the Cold War. This bargain spawned the much-used term, "Finlandization."[37] Also, the exercise likely received a chilly reception in Sweden, which also remains militarily non-aligned but enjoys even closer ties to NATO than Finland.[38]

There are additional noteworthy characteristics of Zapad and other recent Russian exercises. According to an early 2015 article from the Atlantic Council, the scale of these events dwarfs that of NATO's drills. [39] Russia appears to be testing the full spectrum of processes and people required for large-scale mobilization and maneuver. NATO exercises, however, remain mostly notional, except for the participation of small elements that typically number in the low thousands.[40] Russia currently holds these exercises throughout the entirety of its sweeping country, including along the Arctic, and such events usually combine ground, naval, air, and strategic missile forces.[41] Lastly, while most Russian military exercises are planned and prepared for well in advance, Moscow now increasingly employs so-called "snap checks," in which headquarters and maneuver elements have no prior notice but must mobilize and deploy on command.[42]

Perhaps the most combustible element of recent Russian military activity comes in the form of close encounters between its forces and their Western counterparts. Although in 2007 Russia resumed the Soviet-era practice of long-range bomber flights,[43] it was not until Moscow's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 that Russian military posturing vis-à-vis NATO, Finland, Sweden, and others assumed an overtly dangerous nature. Researchers at the European Leadership Network (ELN) catalogued such incidents in a recent analysis.[44] During the eight-month period the report covered (April–October 2014), almost forty incidents occurred, representing a three-fold increase when compared to similar events during the same months of the previous year. Researchers described these as a "highly disturbing picture of violations of national airspace, emergency scrambles, narrowly avoided mid-air collisions, close encounters at sea, simulated attack runs and other dangerous actions happening on a regular basis over a very wide geographical area."[45] High-profile incidents included "a narrowly avoided collision between a civilian airliner and Russian surveillance plane, [the] abduction of an Estonian intelligence officer, and a large-scale Swedish 'submarine hunt'" for a Russian vessel in its waters."[46] Even less severe incidents involved the "harassment of reconnaissance planes, close [over flights] over warships, and Russian 'mock bombing raid' missions."[47] As of the publication of this study, such incidents were ongoing and with no less tenacity.[48]

The Baltic States and NATO – Defense Policy

From a Baltic perspective, [defense] planning has everything to do with Russia. This notion has been met with [skepticism] by some other NATO countries. German [defense] planners, for instance, pride themselves in not knowing where the next war will start, in stark contrast to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

–Swedish Defense Research Agency[49]

For precisely the reason stated in this quote, military alliances are essential to the security of the Baltic States. Even united, these countries could not trump Russia's considerable military might. The official defense policy documents of all three Baltic States declare unequivocally that their national security rests not only on membership in NATO, but more specifically on the United States' continued role as the Alliance's de facto leader and the maintenance of positive Euro-Atlantic relations.[50] These documents also address the EU and its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) but make clear that the EU's military value is to provide a supplemental security alliance that further deepens European integration. Membership in the EU should in no way undermine NATO's prominence or the United States' leadership in transatlantic security matters.[51]

Such policies took time to evolve. After gaining independence, these nations opted to build their forces from scratch, whereas most former Soviet republics simply adapted the local remnants of the Soviet military and retained its weapons and tactics. Initially, the Baltic States used the territorial defense model common in Nordic countries, one that focused on total defense.[52] In the early post-Soviet years, when some Russian forces were still present in these countries, it was Nordic nations that aided the fledgling militaries of Baltic States with equipment and training. Following the complete withdrawal of Russian forces in 1994, Alliance members began providing support. This led the Baltic States to redesign their forces for integration with the NATO as the best hedge against future Russian aggression. By the early 2000s, the Baltic States had "received excellent professional assistance from highly-developed Western armed forces that set a solid foundation for…entry into NATO and the EU."[53]

The Baltic States and NATO – Military Capabilities

NATO membership fundamentally altered the force structure and capabilities of Baltic State militaries. The Alliance's "Smart Defense" program encouraged members "to work together to develop, acquire, operate and maintain military capabilities to undertake the Alliance's essential core tasks."[54] Smaller members focused on establishing niche capabilities that were interoperable with the militaries of larger NATO countries.[55] There was no need for each military to function as an independent, combined arms force. Therefore, for example, the "Baltic states were discouraged from developing fully capable and independent air forces."[56] Also, as a result of this program, the Baltic militaries became dramatically smaller. Latvia and Lithuania abolished conscription in the 2000s. In response to Russia's aggression, however, the Lithuanian parliament voted overwhelmingly in March 2015 to reintroduce compulsory military service for approximately 3,000–3,500 men a year, starting in the autumn of 2015.[57] Table 6 reflects approximations of each country's force strength as of early 2015 (excluding the increase Lithuanian conscription will supply.)

NATO's post-Cold War shift to Smart Defense brought an emphasis on international missions, especially those outside of Europe.[61] In addition to peacekeeping operations, all three nations participated in NATO-led combat operations in Afghanistan and U.S.-led combat operations in Iraq. Deployed forces included special operations forces; company-size, combat arms units; and specialized elements, such as explosive ordnance disposal, naval security detachments, transport aircraft, and communications teams.[62] Following these deployments, the "majority of the officers and [non-commissioned officers] of the armed forces of the three nations…served at least one rotation," and "many of the career cadre have seen multiple tours."[63] These militaries currently have more combat experience than at any point in their short histories.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that these forces must rely on NATO, and especially on the United States, to protect against Russia. Therefore, a brief overview of the Alliance's capabilities is also necessary. NATO's naval power in the area is notable, especially sizeable elements of the American, British, and French navies. All three

Table 6. Force Strength

	Active	Reserve	National Guard	Paramilitary and Border Guards
Estonia[58]	6,160	30,000	12,000	2,100
Latvia[59]	5,310	7,850	7,850	3,800
Lithuania[60]	12,600	6,700	4,400	11,550

forces possess the strategic deterrent of ballistic missile submarines equipped with nuclear warheads.[64] Allied air power in Europe is also impressive, in particular that of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). This command operates "combat-ready units based from the United Kingdom to Turkey, and assets ready to perform close air support, air interdiction, air defense, in-flight refueling, long-range transport and maritime operation support."[65] The United States can quickly send additional sophisticated aircraft to Europe, as evidenced by the recent rotational deployments of B-2 stealth bombers,[66] B-52 bombers,[67] F-15[68] and F-16[69] fighter jets, as well as A-10 ground-attack aircraft.[70] It is worth noting, however, that these assets would have to contend with a peer-level threat from Russia, including its array of standoff weapons. Hence, the value of naval and air forces would have to be evaluated within a different calculus than that which NATO used in its other post-Cold War operations. For example, according to unofficial reporting, the only tactical nuclear weapons NATO possesses on the continent are the legacy B-61 gravity bombs, "designated for use by the U.S. Air Force and, under programs of cooperation, the Belgian, German, Dutch, and Italian air forces, which have dual-capable aircraft (DCA) that can deliver conventional or nuclear weapons."[71] The employment of these weapons would require the penetration of Russia's air defenses.

Although NATO has tremendous land forces in aggregate, such muscle is not concentrated nor is it located anywhere near the Baltic States. If fact, much of this capability resides in the U.S. military, which currently maintains a small footprint on the continent. Additional reinforcements would have to come from the U.S. mainland. The Eighty-Second Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC maintains the Global Response Force (GRF), "a brigade combat team prepared to deploy anywhere in the world within 96 hours of notification."[72] To deploy more than this brigade, though, the United States would have to mobilize additional units and then transport them by air or sea. The reserve elements of European allies further distort NATO's aggregate numbers because their use first requires a lengthy mobilization process.[73] Active components of these militaries are now much smaller than their U.S. counterparts. This reduction was part of Smart Defense, as well as a more general desire to "cash in" on the peace dividend at the end of the Cold War (the latter is also true for Sweden and Finland.) Even the Alliance's more capable members, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and France, would need time to mobilize and deploy in large numbers with heavy equipment. Moreover, it is possible that France, and perhaps others, lack the airlift to rapidly reach the Baltic States.[74] Therefore, movement might have to occur over land. This prospect could be disastrous if these forces lack the pre-positioned supplies and well-rehearsed battle drills necessary to deploy directly into combat from their home garrisons.

The Baltic States and NATO – Aggression Short of War

Russia's land-grab in Crimea and its support for separatists in Donbas prompted much rhetoric from the West, but also some action. Moscow has been on the receiving end of both international condemnation and sanctions. The Baltic States and their allies, in and out of NATO, have exchanged promises of support, participated in combined military exercises, and made plans to construct more effective defenses and processes. Such initiatives occur primarily at the Alliance-level but are also present as other multinational, bilateral, and even unilateral actions.

NATO has officially refocused on collective defense after many years of out-of-area operations.[75] It quadrupled the number of fighter jets in its Baltics Air Policing Mission from four to sixteen, among other U.S. aviation deployments to the region.[76] In late May 2015, naval assets arrived in Tallinn to participate in exercises in the Baltic Sea.[77] As part of its multifaceted Operation Atlantic Resolve, the United States is rotating airborne, mechanized, and armor units throughout the region

for training exercises.[78] The UK took part in armor and mechanized training in Poland.[79]

Other NATO commitments have been promised. At the September 2014 Wales Summit, NATO committed to the three-part Readiness Action Plan (RAP).[80] First, the Alliance will create the Very High Readiness Task Force (VHRTF), a rapid reaction element capable of deploying within forty-eight hours. "While 5,000 troops make up the tip of the spear, the force will be designed to deploy another 25,000 troops within weeks if necessary. The previous NATO response force was far slower and could muster only about 13,000 troops."[81] Second, NATO will establish six command and control centers from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. These will receive the VHRTF, if deployed, and promote greater cooperation among allies.[82] Third, there will be a corps-level combat headquarters in Poland, "able to command and control any training, any exercises and any potential operations on the eastern flank of NATO."[83] However, it is critical to underscore that the RAP has yet to be implemented, and relations with Russia are increasingly confrontational. The VHRTF is the only actual combat force the RAP will create, yet questions remain over its funding, basing, and command and control.[84] Hence, in the event of substantial Russian aggression in the meantime, NATO will have to rely on the smaller, less nimble force the VHRTF was designed to replace, if not on unplanned, unilateral reinforcements from the United States and possibly others.

The Baltic States, for their part, have responded in a number of ways. Most notable was the mid-May 2015 announcement that, along with Poland, they would soon submit a formal request for the permanent basing of a NATO brigade, consisting of a battalion in each of these nations. U.S. General Philip Breedlove, the senior military commander of both NATO and the United States' European Command, vigorously supports a lasting military presence in the Baltics, but substantial practical concerns remain. Once approved by all requesting governments and officially submitted to NATO, the petition would have to navigate a cumbersome, multinational approval process with no guarantee of its passage. Additional obstacles include ongoing Pentagon budget cuts that could further reduce the permanent U.S. footprint in Europe, as well as the lack of existing infrastructure in some of these countries to receive and support additional NATO troops.[85]

In April 2015, the Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland "agreed on closer defense ties and increased solidarity with the Baltic [States]."[86] Later that month, Finland sent letters to nearly a million former conscripts as an official reminder that "conscription is the cornerstone of Finland's [defense] capability."[87] The letters specified which posts these conscripts would hold during a crisis and prompted them to provide their updated contact information. However, in keeping with tradition, the Finnish defense minister publically insisted the move had nothing to do with Russia.[88] Other regional initiatives appear to be less impactful. Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine agreed in September 2014 to form a joint military unit of several thousand personnel.[89] The viability of such a force, however, is clearly in question, at least in part because Ukraine is embroiled in a conflict with Russian-backed separatists in its eastern provinces. In addition, Lithuania recently published and distributed a manual on how to survive a foreign invasion and occupation,[90] and Poland committed to build six fifty-meter-high guard towers along its border with Kaliningrad.[91] Such measures seem largely, if not entirely, superficial.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the degree of resolve in the Baltic States and across NATO is defense spending, as appropriations are typically an accurate reflection of political will. In February 2015, the ELN noted that Estonia is the only Baltic State that will meet NATO's mandated defense spending level of two percent of the GDP in 2015 (though nearby Poland comes close to this mark.) Similar patterns in spending exist throughout most of NATO. France's spending will remain constant, and six countries, including the UK and Germany, will further reduce defense expenditures in 2015. The ELN noted that the promises of the 2014 Wales Summit, rhetoric against Russian aggression, and upheaval across the Middle East have had little effect on the defense spending of NATO's most powerful members or on the more general "long-term downward trend in [European defense] expenditure," a trend that is largely consistent with domestic opinion in these countries.[92] Finally, among the report's conclusions was the following: "[behind] the façade of NATO unity, real threat perceptions

Collaborative Analysis Event Insight:

In discussion of the military component to Russia's influence, the foundational question concerned the limits of Russia's actions and the threshold for a NATO response. Russia, as the most powerful single actor in the region, seeks to provoke and intimidate neighbor states individually while avoiding a confrontation with a collective West. Demonstrations of aggression against NATO members have included large-scale exercises in which NATO countries are portrayed as aggressors, a dramatic increase in military activity along NATO borders, and violations of the air and maritime space of NATO members. The political will of large NATO members is a limiting factor in effective deterrence. Gaining consensus on a meaningful avenue of strategic response is difficult because some members have long discounted insistence from the Baltic States and other NATO members in Eastern Europe concerning the Russian threat. Overall, NATO is failing on long-term deterrence strategies, and limited short-term actions have been insufficient to properly respond to Russian actions. Thus far, NATO has reassured allies in Eastern Europe with an increased but rotating presence and made commitments on paper (Very High Readiness Task Force, Corps Headquarters in Poland, crisis response centers on NATO's eastern flank, etc.) that have yet to materialize into real action.

differ significantly among allies and this is reflected in their divergent approaches to budget decisions."[93]

Field Research Observations

During expert interviews and observation of the border lands in the Baltic States, five important themes emerged. First, as is well-known, the Baltic militaries remain quite limited and depend on alliance support in the event of an attack. An important feature of that support is access to the Baltic States, and currently that access is obtained by land from Poland into Lithuania and by sea and air over the Baltic Sea. However, experts interviewed in Lithuania stated that were Russia to occupy Gotland island in the Baltic Sea, it could cut off air and sea access to the region and limit alliance access to the connection between Poland and Lithuania. That border stretches only approximately 100 kilometers (103–104 kilometers, or sixty-four to sixty-five miles) between the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus, which hosts a number of Russian military bases and does not present a guaranteed safe ingress for alliance support. Second, in line with the first theme, several respondents highlighted the continuing importance of conventional military in Russia's hybrid warfare operations. Russian conventional military continues to pose a threat to the Baltic States, according to experts in the region. Third, there are no Russian military installations inside the Baltic States.

In this respect, respondents in Estonia identified the historical importance of the Blue Hills in the north as the only viable route from Russia into the country because south of Narva lies Lake Peipus, extensive swampland, and heavily forested hills. Eastern Latvia is similarly heavily forested. In regard to potential hybrid warfare operations, these conditions present significant obstacles for ingress. This contrasts with Crimea, where the naval base at Sevastopol provided a point of entry for personnel, equipment, and machinery. The exclave of Kaliningrad might be viewed as a Baltic corollary to Sevastopol, but experts in Lithuania explained that the transit agreement between Lithuania and Russia regulated the transit route in extensive detail with the purpose of leaving no room for abuse of that agreement, including the provision that the engine cars on the route be Lithuanian and not Russian. Fourth, first-hand observation of the border region reveals a

border protection infrastructure that could be viewed as a liability to Estonia. Although signs of patrolling were apparent, few active personnel were observed, and the border appeared to be porous. The border region in Latvia appeared more heavily populated than in Estonia, and a respondent in Riga characterized the population in eastern Latvia as unwilling to permit Russian (or unidentified) troops to transit the territory freely or without reporting suspicious activity. Finally, after the events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, all three Baltic States have been planning and training for hybrid warfare scenarios, including collaboration between local law enforcement and national military. All three Baltic States have amended their laws to accommodate these scenarios by disambiguating roles and responsibilities of relevant entities, including the decision-making process and authority for activating national military inside the country, as well as the division of command authority between law enforcement and military once national militaries are activated. Respondents in all three Baltic States made clear that their militaries, border, and law enforcement groups may be small, but they exercise a level of professionalism commensurate with NATO membership, which separates them from Ukraine's less professional military components.

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Conclusion

The preceding sections provided information and analyses of how Russia currently exerts influence in the Baltic States. Based on that information, this report culminates with an exploration of potential future scenarios. These hypotheticals are not rank-ordered by probability of occurrence. In fact, there is no effort to assert the likelihood that any scenario might happen. To do so would be excessively speculative given the many variables at play. Instead, the scenarios are presented in descending order of severity, more or less. The five scenarios appear to focus on military options in contrast to Gerasimov's model. This distortion exists only to account for the full range of possibilities. The military-based scenarios are not meant to outweigh nonmilitary-based ones.

The first scenario is a deliberate and sudden Russian conventional attack on the Baltic States, and possibly Gotland Island, with the goal to seize and occupy these lands. This could take place under the guise of a snap check or other large-scale exercise. Several days before he assumed the chairmanship of the NATO Military Committee in June 2015, Czech General Petr Pavel said that Russia could occupy the Baltic States in two days.[1] His remark was the product of a calculation that included both political and military factors. Russia's consolidated power structure, known as the power vertikal, would likely provide an advantage over NATO in command and control, at least at the onset of a well-planned military action (as Moscow's handling of unforeseen crises and more vaguely defined contingencies has been more problematic).[2] Article V of the Washington Treaty implies that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all. Though this promise of collective defense is explicit, it also requires unanimity among members.[3] The mere process to secure such a vote would take numerous hours at the least, but perhaps days or longer. In the meantime, the Baltic State militaries would be without support, barring unilateral action from allies. NATO forces then would have to mobilize and deploy, albeit at a slower pace and in fewer numbers than the still-notional VHRTF would provide. This delay likely would allow superior Russian forces in the area to make sizeable gains and thus alter the region's military geography even more in Moscow's favor. Hence, any NATO or U.S. response to such an event would probably have to occur as an effort to liberate the Baltic States and not as a rout of invading Russian forces.

Russian military transportation and logistics networks would hamper the country's ability to sustain high-intensity conflict. Despite its airlift capacity, Russia still relies mainly on rail to support military operations. The slower speed of this mode of transport is made even more problematic given the vastness of the territory. Also, the country still relies on the "Soviet practice of moving bulk supplies," which are unavailable for immediate use as they would then require sorting, preparation, and distribution.[4] In addition, the well-trained and well-equipped troops of the Crimea operation are not standard throughout the force. A prolonged conflict would force Russia to commit conscripts and reservists with older equipment.[5] However, in the aftermath of a seizure of the Baltic States, Russia could rely on its nuclear deterrent to avoid a protracted conflict. Russia proclaims the right to use nuclear weapons in defense of its homeland, even against a conventional attack "when the state's very existence has been threatened."[6] Just as Moscow now considers Crimea to be its sovereign territory,[7] so might it view any land seized during this sort of scenario. Putin suggested he was prepared to put nuclear forces on alert during the Crimea annexation, even though the West did not threaten military action.[8] An impending NATO operation to retake the Baltic States would likely prompt a more stern response from Moscow, possibly a tactical nuclear strike along the lines of the Zapad-2009 scenario. If Russian air defenses were to prevent NATO from dropping its B-61 gravity bomb, the Alliance might not be able to respond in kind. Instead, NATO would have to negotiate for peace, continue fighting with conventional forces, or escalate with strategic nuclear weapons.

The second scenario involves another Article V situation, but one in which Russia would conduct a more limited incursion. Among the justifications Moscow presented for its interventions in Georgia and Ukraine was the protection of its compatriot population. Russia has made numerous remarks at international forums expressing concern for these populations in the Baltic States, and Russian NGOs have published extensively on the perceived discrimination they face, thus man-

ufacturing the evidence it needs to justify invasion as humanitarian intervention or peacekeeping. However, to be done is to manufacture a high-profile incident to serve as *casus belli* for an intervention, such as a heavy-handed police crackdown during a protest against which Russia must protect its compatriots. The Estonian city of Narva is, perhaps, the most obvious candidate for such an operation, given its location on the border with mainland Russia. The eastern region of Latvia, Latgale, also presents opportunities for manufactured internal disturbances, as well as the Vilnius region in the southeast of Lithuania. As previously noted, however, the compatriot populations in these areas are not currently assessed as susceptible to mobilization efforts. It would seem more likely that such populations would serve as pretextual justification for military invasion. As a humanitarian intervention or peacekeeping mission, it might not appear as a move against NATO per se. Global opinion would be divided and some nations might even call for an immediate cessation in hostilities and a political resolution. Although it is not the position of this report to speculate on NATO solidarity, an earnest analysis must address the virtual certainty that Russian planners have questioned the circumstances under which NATO would be willing to go to war. After all, an Article V declaration must be unanimous. Would all members agree to fight for a small city of predominantly ethnic Russians on NATO's far eastern fringe? A single dissenting vote would serve as a Russian victory over NATO, even if other Alliance members were then to take military action.

The third scenario takes place along similar lines. Russia could conduct limited artillery or air strikes, even a raid, and claim the operation was necessary either to protect compatriots or to defend against aggression. This differs from the second scenario in that it would not present the Alliance with the need to liberate these states, as Russian forces would no longer be present. It is likely that Russian military planners have pondered whether this factor would complicate a call for collective defense. Perhaps an important variable, which also applies to scenario two, would be if the Russian operation were to kill, wound, or capture NATO security forces. However, it must be noted that this might have occurred already. On September 3, 2014, President Obama delivered a speech in Tallinn to reaffirm NATO support for the Baltic States.[9] Two days later, Russian security forces captured Eston Kohver, an Estonian intelligence agent. Moscow insisted Kohver engaged in espionage on Russian soil, but Estonia refuted the allegation and said he was on the Estonian side of the border.[10] Tallinn further claimed that other Estonia officials witnessed the event but were unable to assist Kohver as they "were obstructed by heavy explosions and grenades generating thick smoke."[11] As of the publication of this study, the incident lingered as a bilateral dispute between Estonia and Russia, and Kohver remained in a notorious Moscow prison.[12]

The fourth scenario involves cyber attacks or Russian intelligence and/or special operations forces in the Baltic States but in such a way that a definitive link to Moscow could not be established (this likely takes place already). High-profile incidents would demonstrate Russia's agency in the Baltic States but would be insufficient to start a war. For instance, many of the instigators and organizers of the protests and violence during the 2007 Bronze Soldier incident have been charged and tried in court but only with crimes related to property damage, disorderly conduct, and assault. Insufficient evidence was found to charge them with crimes related to insurrection or espionage as agents of the Russian State. Baltic State security forces are better postured than Ukrainian security forces to contend with this sort of incident, and other NATO members would have time to bolster their allies. Article IV of the NATO Charter is more likely to be engaged as it was during the 2007 Bronze Soldier incident. Of import for the Alliance would be how these high-profile incidents are viewed by its members. Would they show NATO's inability to guarantee the sovereignty of the Baltic States and over time undermine members' confidence in the Alliance? Could Russian media's coverage of such incidents and debates on them steered by Russian NGOs and political parties cultivate so much dissatisfaction with the national governments of the Baltic States or of NATO that the popular political process leads to decisions to leave the EU or NATO? Given the current mistrust of Russian media and dominance of pro-EU and pro-NATO political parties, this seems unlikely, but Russia shows no signs of decreasing its pressure on the Baltic States.

The fifth and final scenario is a perpetuation of the status quo until one or both sides could no longer take part. In other words, this would be a continuation of power politics that stops short of open hostilities. Russia would continue to employ non-military means of coercion as well as aggressive military posturing via exercises and close encounters. NATO would continue its reassurance measures and proceed with the RAP, and sanctions would endure. Though this might not qualify as a new Cold War, it would at least result in an extended period of heightened tensions. How might sanctions, shrinking oil and gas revenues, and the continuation of resource-intensive support to Ukrainian separatists alter Russia's appetite to contest NATO? Other possibilities that could refocus Russia's attention inwardly include regime change in Moscow and a renewed insurgency in the North Caucasus. Concerning NATO, what might be the impact of prolonged economic austerity or conflicting threat perceptions? Would either or both of these issues prevent Alliance members from reinvesting in defense or dissuade them from bearing the long-term costs associated with sustaining this increased level of operations? The answers to such questions are, of course, unknown. In the meantime, there exists the possibility of a miscalculation or inadvertent incident that could lead to war, as well as the specter of Russian intervention under the pretext of humanitarian intervention.

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